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The Abu Ghosh music festival, 1967, a photograph by Leonard Freed, which is taken from *Israel: The first forty years*, a history in photographs from the archives of Magnum, with an introduction by Abba Eban. *Israel: The first forty years* was published last week by Thames and Hudson (200 pp., with 184 black-and-white illustrations, £20, 0 500 54127 2).

The art of being good

John Bayley

ANTHONY CURTIS and JOHN WHITEHEAD
(Editors)
W. Somerset Maugham: The Critical Heritage
470pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £25.
07100 9640 2

The third volume of Anthony Powell's memoirs, *Faces in My Time*, contains a revealing little anecdote about Somerset Maugham. The conversation at a lunch party given in Maugham's honour by *Punch* turned upon titles, and Maugham observed how quaint and engaging it is that in Victorian fiction, and particularly in Trollope, a Duke will address his son by his courtesy title. Happening through his marriage and its family connections to know a good deal about such matters, Powell replied that the custom indeed still continued. "The moment the words were out of my mouth I saw that I had blundered. Maugham did not reply. He simply turned to his other neighbour and conversed with him throughout the rest of lunch."

Even the very slightest imputation on a matter of social fact would no doubt have drawn this response from Maugham, a writer who prided himself on seeing society steadily and seeing it whole, with the unblinking gaze of an alligator surveying pond life. Not for him the solecisms "of those who have studied the upper classes only in the pages of the illustrated papers". But such an extreme sensitiveness shows there is something very much wrong somewhere, and not just in relation to social lore and practice. Unimaginable that Shakespeare or Dickens, Thackeray or Trollope, writers who knocked about in their own ways in society and knew their way round it, should care tuppence whether they got such things right or wrong. Not that they were above them, but truth was to them more important than pedantry. For Maugham as an artist, and indeed as a human being, the appearance of accuracy was to a very large extent a substitute for the truth. As an artist he knew what use could be made of everything, and he knew that the ring of truth could be imitated by a lucid and dispassionate manner.

The magic success of his plays - in 1908 he had four running in the West End at once - shows how exactly he understood the art of the theatre as then practised, and how much it depended for him on making an improbable plot seem down-to-earth worldly wisdom.

What was true for Sheridan was also true for Sardou and for Scribe, and Maugham in his own way perfected the formula. The audience felt the real thing was being shown them, and the apparent shock was highly pleasurable. The exact opposite is of course true of Shakespeare. His enthralling plots are not supposed to be true - at their worst they may offer what Dr Johnson called "unresisting imbecility" - but his human beings are true in spite of themselves: often more so and in different ways, than their dramatic roles require. Shakespeare in fact reverses theatrical procedure where Maugham and his predecessors reinforce it. The great artist knows that truth can never be made use of, while Maugham knows that by being made use of it becomes the truth. Truth made use of is a cliché: therefore a style composed of lucid clichés is its best medium. The divine anarchy of Shakespeare's language is again the opposite method of revelation.

Maugham has therefore, in the Shakespearean sense, no domesticity. Macbeth would be for him the study of a murderer, not a whole unexpected dimension of individuality, intimacy, the soul. Late on in his career he did some stories to be made into two admirable films: so far as I know the only time a film has successfully divided itself into a trio or quartet of short stories, each of which was introduced by the Master in person. One of the best, superbly acted by George Cole, concerned a young chap whose passion was kite-flying, with ever bigger and better kites. He falls in love and gets married. He continues to fly his kites, however; and one day his wife, exasperated by what she considers his neglect of her, destroys his latest masterpiece in a fit of pique. Outraged, he abandons her, and is eventually sent to prison for refusing to pay her maintenance. All he will say, in response to pleas for reason from parents and probation officers, is "She broke my kite." And there the film story ends - a perfect Maugham anecdote. A friend of his was so interested in the story that she asked him if it was true and where he had got it from. It was true: he had been told about it, and had actually met the young man; but when he asked what had finally happened to him he had no idea and took no interest. For him the story was over. The young man had done his job; contributed to a work of art; and that was all that mattered about him. Truth had become a tale.

But, it may be objected, why all this emphasis on truth? Maugham was an artist of origi-

nality who created his own world, whose language has its own "code", and that is all that matters. It is certainly the case that Maugham's techniques were highly influential. Younger novelists for whom he was a figure of the past - Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Powell himself - had insensibly imbibed his message and his method, and put them to good use. *A Handful of Dust* is in a sense a perfect Maugham tale, and its characters would be absolutely in place in his world. The hidden personal animus in it is again very much a Maugham legacy. Greene creates his own



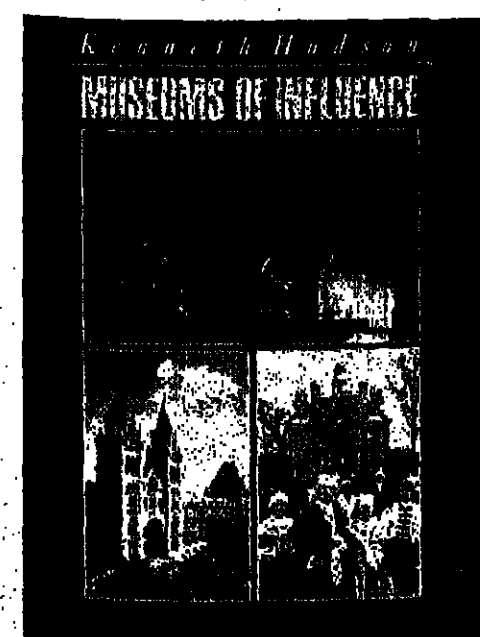
urban nightmare, with Catholicism filling the same role that "spirituality" so successfully and disastrously played in *The Razor's Edge*. The "urban pastoral" that Powell felt he had composed in *Afternoon Men* has the same invention of an idiom for realizing life which Maugham had slowly and perhaps involuntarily developed. The new novel was still under his spell, and he had helped to teach it to create the taste by which it was to be judged. Ironically for a writer who set out to be colourless but accurate - whose *specialité de maison*, as Raymond Mortimer observed, was not having illusions - he had contrived to create in his novels, as previously in his plays, the most illusory view of life possible, based on a house

style. An even greater irony is that the writers who had unconsciously learned his lesson surpassed him by learning to tell the truth in their own way - a Shakespearean way - whereas he remained stuck, as it were, in his own conviction, of perspicuous plainness, which was really a perpetual and motionless romance: women's magazines and *Reader's Digest* all the way. "To write simply is as difficult as to be good", he says in *Don Fernando*. No more deadly observation about himself and his work has ever been made by an author.

If the search for simplicity was Maugham's curse, the Midas-touch that turned everything he contemplated to gold, it certainly enabled him to create an immensely varied body of work and to build up an apparently indestructible reputation. All books in the Critical Heritage series are valuable and revealing, giving as they do a historical cross-section of taste and attitude, not only in relation to a given writer but to the ethos and fashion of his period. But this one on Maugham has a quite special fascination, and the editors are to be congratulated on the way they have assembled a whole perspective of changing views on the theatre, the novel and every other form to which Maugham's talent resorted. Whatever he touched turned none the less to the same metal; there can be few writers so various who are at the same moment always the same - the persona unerringly unchanged. And yet, singularly enough, the effect is never boring. All Maugham's critics and reviewers seem struck by this paradox and exercise themselves on the reason for it, the result being usually itself highly readable. As a writer Maugham is like one of those people whose characters can bear endless discussion: a literary dinner party, as it were, would always become more animated if the subject of himself and his writing came up, and would lead on to further general debate about the nature of art, life, personality, etc.

Perhaps this is his real secret, and a curiously original one. As spectators of a high-jumping contest are said to involuntarily lift their legs slightly as the competitors go over, so readers of Maugham become unaware shrewd judges of motive and conduct, players of the Human Nature game. Why did X divorce his wife? Why did Y leave her husband? Great writers, of course, know not only that there are no answers, but that these are totally unreal questions. But it is amusing, and can even be instructive, to pretend that they are not; to play patience with the cards Maugham deals. In one of his Far Eastern travel books he records an

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occasion when he was in fact playing patience, while staying in a Buddhist monastery, and how the monks clustering round soon picked up the idea and began to nudge him at important moments and indicate what cards he should choose. Maugham's readers are all like those monks, and to contrive that they should be so is itself a remarkable achievement. Reading Kafka or Proust we enter an unreachable mind, where views of things are dissolved in the writers' own special intellectual genius. But anyone can play Maugham's game, and is demurely, suavely encouraged to do so.

This means, among other things, that his views of the other writers, great writers, are of an ineluctable vulgarity. All too often they simply don't know how to play the game. In *The Summing Up, A Writer's Notebook, Points of View, Great Novelists and their Novels* and his numerous other essays on literature, he takes much the same view of all authors. Is what they write convincing? Is it probable as well as readable? In other words, is it the kind of thing I can write myself? Sometimes there is point in his strictures, but more often they merely goad the reader into playing the Human Nature game with him. One of the liveliest pieces in this book is Noel Annan on the *Great Novelists* collection. Maugham opines that Dostoevsky's psychology is seriously at fault in *The Idiot* when he makes Nastasia Filippovna so implacable against her original seducer, Totsky. Girls do not attach all that importance to their virginities, says Maugham. "I cannot but think Mr Maugham's knowledge of virgins is sadly rusty," cries Annan gleefully, and he proceeds to expound a rival theory of its removal. Maugham feels that the incident in *Persuasion* when Louisa Musgrove falls on her head on the Cobb at Lyme Regis is absurdly clumsy. Why should a naval officer who has seen much action and made a fortune in prize money be paralysed with horror when a young lady is stunned? Annan can tell him exactly why. Does he not grasp the power of the context, and the obvious fact that a gentleman who has seen death in battle can easily be flummoxed by a lady in a fainting fit?

And so on. It may not exactly be criticism but it is all great fun; and it shows just why Maugham was so successful – on the stage, in his stories, in his remarks about life and letters – at making his audience co-operate with him. The Anglo-Saxons love a game, and Maugham is not only a star player but has just the right knack of concealing his own enjoyment at playing it so well. In fact his style is nicely calculated to reveal his enjoyment while seeming to dissimulate it, and makes the reader preen himself in the same way, as smoking-room cronies and men of the world. The real paradox, as Anthony Powell's little anecdote shows, is that this air of mutual cosiness was itself wholly dissimulatory. No writer could have been less cosy, in the flesh, than Maugham. Yet as an artist he could win all hearts, as is shown by the rhapsodies about his plays before the First World War by such hardened theatre critics as Desmond MacCarthy and J. T. Grein – "as light as a feather and as bright as a diamond – nothing real, but something very whimsical, seasoned with vivid dots and crosses of acute observation".

An even stranger paradox is that while the Anglo-Saxons were enjoying him with just that shade of patronage which gives an additional zest to the pleasure, the foreigners were taking him very seriously indeed. Reviewing an *Anthology of Maugham Criticism*, by K. W. Jones, in the *New Statesman* in 1954, John Raymond was amazed to find that there existed in France a centre of Maugham Studies; that Professor Dottin gave lectures on him at the University of Toulouse, that Madame Suzanne Cluery had written a substantial tome entitled *La Philosophie de Somerset Maugham*, and that Dr Papajewski in Würzburg had composed the definitive study of his *Welt-, Lebens- und Kunstanschauung*. The significance of this may well be, as Noel Annan and others had perceived, that Maugham may be read not only as fellow games player but as guru and pedagogue. All these roles can indeed be combined, for as Annan genially puts it, when comparing Maugham to a schoolmaster, he enjoys "the well-known pedagogic game of scoring off the other beaks". There is also something unfathomable about the foreign reception of English writers. As Raymond said, "one has only to note the deep respect accorded Miss Lehmann and Mr Morgan in Paris to see that a popular writer is not without honour save among his own country's reviewers". The writer fully appreciated only by his own country's Common Reader may be taken for a Sage abroad.

But there remains a hidden dimension to Maugham's world, one which is not untouched upon by any of the contributors, past or present, to this Critical Heritage volume. The critic who comes closest to it is Anne Armstrong, reviewing *The Narrow Corner*, an Eastern novel, in the *Saturday Review* in 1932. She claims that Maugham "does not understand women". Although "he realises that man is a complex animal, part good and part bad", his women are either "uninteresting angels (off stage) or passionate and consuming vamps in the spot light". She goes on to remark that Maugham "tacitly admits his lack of understanding in this direction" by having a man act as narrator and interpreter for the acts of the two women in this drama. It is to be doubted whether any reader of the time realized that Maugham was a closet homosexual, nor indeed is there any definite clue to it. None the less, with the benefit of hindsight, the indications are certainly there, as this reviewer may have intuited unknowingly. Of *Human Bondage* and *Cakes and Ale* are often held up as examples of how good Maugham's fiction could be, partly at least because of their portraits of women. But Mildred the teasing waitress is really drawn from the world of homosexual contacts and crushes, and Auden, in what is otherwise a rather dull review for the *New York Times* of *A Writer's Notebook*, observes that "few of us have the strength of character to be capable of the sustained folly of the hero in *Of Human Bondage*". No doubt he was aware of its real significance. Rosie, the wife of the great writer in *Cakes and Ale*, often seen as a fine, warm and realistic creation, is also surely modelled on a male type: the genial, amoral and sympathetic cruiser of bars and business men. Her street adventure after the child dies shocks by its duck/rabbit syndrome: it gets its effect of a powerful truth by being transposed from a different genre of sexual impulse. It bears out the force of Anne Armstrong's objection that "such things happen, but not quite like that".

Of course Maugham could generalize – none better – about the ills of our situation, as the power in *Of Human Bondage* shows. But while the undercover side of his art adds enormously to its human interest it is also bound to play a part in its subtle atmosphere of falsity. That falsity may indeed be the most interesting as it

is the most vulnerable and attractive side of the art. It makes Maugham a human case, one of us, and in the opposite sense to his persona of patience-playing Martini-drinking man of the world. Perhaps his film story about the young man who liked to fly kites was not so heartless after all? Perhaps kite-flying was a secret symbol, like Bunburying, and Maugham's secret sympathies are all with the young man abused by the woman and unable to forgive her? When he gave up the stage after his great successes in it Maugham was to write with characteristic mock-modesty – and a good deal of kidding on the level – that good art and successful theatre were incompatible, and that he would devote himself from now on to the real thing, the pursuit of "Perfection". A deadly comment, once again, but also a touching one, for it goes back to the Nineties ideal, to the half-flippant, half-serious world of Oscar Wilde, and to what Henry James called the "madness of art". Strickland, in *The Moon and Sixpence*, is a man who gives up all for what really suits him. In spite of his popularity with the upper-middle-class "good sorts", whom he insouciantly made use of in his stories, Maugham's real achievement may well be as a "camp" writer, of a very unusual sort, a meticulously undercover Ronald Firbank. Even his vulgarity and his extreme touchiness can seem congenial – like his clarity and his "modesty" – when viewed as a part of a complex, totally maintained act. There are said to be occasions when Maugham's cover was blown in an unintentionally farcical manner, as when he smilingly replied to a society hostess, hectoring him not to leave a party, that he always went to bed early to keep his youth. "Oh why don't you bring him", she pleaded.

The perfectly genuine impulses towards religion, goodness, Nirvana, are themselves all part of the same atmosphere. All camp writers tend to be cynics with a special kind of tendresse for sanctity. In his review of *The Summing Up* in 1938 Montgomery Belgion is struck by Maugham's comment that he "had never experienced the bliss of requited love", and observes that he must have written so often about one-sided passion not simply because it makes a good plot, but because he considered it particularly true to life. But disproportion in such matters is true not only of a certain kind of *millieu* but of the literary conventions that go with it. And it is striking that so many unexpected celebrities – Isherwood, Auden, Graham Greene, Cyril Connolly – all seem to feel affection for Maugham, a bantering affection it is true, but an unmistakably familial one; while hard-faced judges right outside the charmed circle, like Edmund Wilson, treat him

with total impatience and disdain. Graham Greene, an enthusiast for the Von Stroheim cult, exclaimed of Maugham's *Don Fernando* in 1935 that he "had never read a book with more excitement and amusement". Cyril Connolly was equally pleased with *The Razor's Edge* in the *New Statesman* in 1944, and in a review called "The Art of Being Good" (perceptive title) expressed puzzlement, "considering the sheer delight that I and all my friends have received from this novel, that it has been so uncharitably reviewed". Connolly may also have started the story that Larry Darrell, the bright-eyed hero of *The Razor's Edge*, who discredits all its worldly characters just by being himself, was based on Christopher Isherwood. For Auden, Maugham, like Cocteau, was always one of the *monsters sacrés*.

A remarkable achievement, to have been so popular with two such different categories of reader, and it may be worth wondering whether that by itself may not be one recipe for survival: in the same sense, for instance, in which Conan Doyle has both a popular and a cult following. The same thought may have occurred to Cyril Connolly, who at the end of the editors' perceptive and temperate introduction is quoted for his summing-up. His obituary notice forecast an immortality for the story-teller's world, "the world of verandah and prahu which we enter, as we do that of Conan Doyle's Baker Street, with a sense of happy and eternal homecoming". It may well be so. But for a writer with the ambition to put nothing but the truth on paper it would be an odd fate. Nothing dates like truth, in Maugham's sense of it, and as a teller of tales his nemesis would seem to be that now we don't believe a word, even if it happens to be true. Yet what also remains is a sense of the man, the complex human figure, whom nothing in the end can conceal, and it is that relation which modern criticism prefers to avoid, seeking a text in which the author is no longer relevant. Maugham's personality may be, must be, perpetually relevant. How else can we receive a sentence like the following, Maugham's comment on his fellow-author Cervantes, who, it seems, lived on the immoral earnings of his sisters and daughter.

I do not believe that there is any man who if the whole truth were known of him would not seem a monster of depravity; and also I believe that there are very few who have not at the same time virtue, goodness and beauty.

Coming from a man of the world such a reflection is not worth having. Coming from Maugham, who only tried all his life to be one, it has a certain point.

by which readers prolong their identification with him.

Being so cunningly overlooked allows Jenkins to be a looker-on, and his lurking watchfulness gives us a good view of various ways of seeing – ranging from Mr Deacon's paintings to Sir Magnus's photographs to Pamela's voyeurism. What Jenkins sees around him is reinforced, too, by his many and varied references to paintings. Indeed, the inside of his head is festooned with images that explain, illuminate, support and diversify his experience.

It is these images that Lady Violet Powell has collected to form this *Album*, interspersing them with long quotations from the novels, brief linking passages, apt photographs of people (like Julian Maclaren-Ross), places (like Hever Castle), and memorabilia (like a French postcard of the 1930s, in the author's collection, which shows a woman sitting on a man's knee, above the caption: "Sex Appeal"). It's an affectionate, justly proud tribute and – like the amiable introduction by John Bayley – will serve as a last appetizer for those who haven't read the novels, and as a welcome *aide-mémoire* for those who have, but whose pictorial memory is less informed or less accurate than Jenkins's.

For all its virtues, though, the book damages a little the visualizing spirit of the *Dance*. Its "informational value cannot be gainsaid, but by making public and exact the images which are remembered privately and (often) imprecisely, it threatens the sense of inwardness which is

the key to the novels' intimate appeal. Where the matching of text and image is fluent and relaxed in the *Album*, this problem can be hushed up. But where there are more hectic pairings (a reference to Rosie Manassah, "a lively gleaming little Jewess in a scarlet frock", delivers a detail of a lady in a harem by Lecomte du Nouy) the effect is reductive. It calls to mind a David Frost programme of years ago, which satirized Television News producers' mania for matching words to pictures by supplying separate illustrations to all three words of *Lord* (doddler in full fig) *Privy* (outside bog). *Seal* (with a ball on its nose).

Vernon Lee (the pseudonym of Violet Paget, born 1856, died 1935) was the author of a manual of aesthetics and studies of Renaissance art, a pacifist, and friend to Robert Browning, Walter Pater, George Bernard Shaw and the painters Whistler and Sargent. *Supernatural Tales: Excursions into Fantasy* (222pp. Peter Owen. £10.95. 0 7206 0680 2) is a collection of six of her short stories, set in Italy in different historical periods, and peopled with lovesick princes, jesters, dwarfs, Jesuits and ghosts. In their baroque richness, flashes of macabre humour and their psychological battles between good and evil, the stories call to mind the French *fin-de-siècle* and Isaac Dinesen's much later *Seven Gothic Tales*. Vernon Lee herself spoke of her exploration of "that wonder-world of things moth eaten – the inventory of my enchanted garret".

Professor Crader's satellite

Galen Strawson

SAUL BELLOW
More Die of Heartbreak
335pp. Secker and Warburg. £10.95.
0 436 03962 1

Saul Bellow is the Paracelsus Professor of Metaphysical Anthropology in the Universe of Chicago (which embraces the Western world). His special period is the ageing twentieth century, his special concern is with kinship – he is the great prose poet of blood ties – and with whatever it is that the expression "the soul" still names. His most detailed and original work has avoided the extremes of the human condition (joy, high tragedy, manifest enlightenment or perdition), concentrating on the everyday intensity of thinking sensibility and theory-struck affectivity. He is a virtuoso vicar and ambivalent celebrant of the history of ideas in its application to humanity, unsurpassed in the recovery of mortal insight from the coils and back cupboards of Grand Theory – from the "Great Ideas" and pantheistic explanatory schemes of the species. His range of reference is Himalayan (it keeps on pushing upwards). His energies as a novelist are patently philosophical. He has the abstract habit of mind (he has it bad).

Philosophy shows its quality in its detail, and Bellow is no exception. Even metaphysical anthropologists must do their fieldwork. Those who tire of the more abstract theory find Bellow at his best in the concrete field (the super-urban, slummy, high-rise field), with his gift for the human particular, his visionary grasp of the spiritual implications of body shape and facial physiognomy – of the way character is bound up with anatomy and expresses itself in gait and gesture, in eye demeanour, in the tenor of the lips (the inherited curve, the acquired muscular set).

Sometimes the theoretical speculations go critical, it's true. They rampage through the

mental lives of the main characters, the Bellow aspects and personae. Herzog in *Herzog* and Citrine in *Humboldt's Gift* are inspired casualties (Sammiller in *Mr Sammler's Planet* and Corde in *The Dean's December* are models of intellectual sobriety by contrast). But the distinction between fieldwork and theorizing doesn't stand up for long. The theories are part of the field, and live in the lives of their thinkers. Busy streets impinge, so do urgent hypotheses about the meaning of life. Both have to be negotiated. The general and the particular produce each other in a double movement, the concrete and specific acquiring universality of implication by virtue of their detail and precision, the abstractions of theory taking on body and singularity in the drama of individual existence.

Many novelists and short story writers achieve the first part of this movement, few achieve the second – and none today with Bellow's dramatic energy and Romantic charge, none with his helpless commitment and Gothic surrender (compare Kundera, Murdoch, Tourneur and Updike). But his quarrel with theory goes deep. On the one hand he is an advocate of "negative capability" – scornful of the pretensions of official philosophy, deeply unimpressed by the claims of sociology and psychology ("one of the lower by-products of the . . . oscillation of modern consciousness"), suspicious (tired) of all the other larger-scale pretensions to understanding and explanation of the human. On the other hand he is a born speculator. His heroes are always trying it on. Their superconductive, scattered, memoristic minds are always running feasibility tests on some central clutch of organizing insights into the profane (but metaphysical) mystery of the human heart, connecting everything with everything *en passant* (Eleanor of Aquitaine with Ayers Rock, say, or Spinoza, hang-gliding and Chappaquiddick). Outstripped by reality, by the whirl of organism, by the unmasterable complexity of inner and outer life, they multiply perspectives in the search for pattern.

Sparkling and shorting, they go brilliantly under, their theoretical impulses towards simplicity and solution becoming part of the problem and multiplying the comic complication.

There is (we learn it again) no GUT for human existence, no Grand Unified Theory for *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Instead there are bolts of comprehension, temporary non-transferable truths; insight is nomadic, it has no foundation in formulae. Understanding is partial, unnervingly disposable, and not itself understandable. The most one can expect is an unsettled, adaptable sensitivity to others (but rarely to oneself) which is unsystematizable, withered by close inspection, cultivable only by indirect means, and mostly a matter of unalterable native gift.

The great task of human metaphysics is description, and Bellow's records of "modern consciousness" are part of the basic archive. Inevitably, however, the subject has a normative side. It raises Socrates' old question – How should one live? How should one live in this place and time? (How should one live through the "morning inferno"? In *More Die of Heartbreak* it is Kenneth Trachtenberg who raises the question – incomplete Kenneth, an American, Paris-born, raised by friendly parents, his mother now an aid worker in Somalia, his father a bon vivant, a friend of intellectuals (Oueaneau, Sperber, Kojève, the great Hegelian) and most of all an *homme à femmes*, an "amorous genius" with a "world-historical cock".

Kenneth lacks his father's sexual gift (he thinks he doesn't much mind). He is tall, thin, sallow with high-set eyes; a long-faced man in his mid-thirties with a "Jesusy look" and a hearing aid concealed by long hair. Approaching mid-life (in the strict Dantean sense), he has left Paris for the American Midwest, in order to live close to his widowed uncle Benn B. Crader, an internationally famous botanist now specializing in polar lichens. He teaches Russian Studies at his uncle's university in an anonymous big city, a kind of dull

Chicago shifted south on to the prairies, lakeless and Loopyless (but with an Eccentric Circle Electronic Tower), a Rustbelt metropolis somewhere between Pittsburgh and Denver.

Why has he come? He has a *Bildung* problem and a lot of *meshugali* theories (up to and including Swedenborg, the "Buddha of the North"). He wants to "make his soul" (it's in poor shape); he seeks "enlargement of personality" and "America-comprehension" (he's a third-generation greenhorn). "Inner communion with the great human reality" is his true occupation; it's "the only worthwhile enterprise around". He wants to emulate the "Citizens of Eternity" – people like Moses, Achilles, Odysseus, the Prophets, Socrates, Edgar in *King Lear*, Prospero, Pascal, Mozart, Pushkin, William Blake. These we think about and, if possible, make our souls by.

To do this he needs to be in America; and he needs to be near Uncle Benn. If Benn isn't yet a Citizen of Eternity, he is close – with his big rounded back (as if it concealed a wingcase) and lack of ironic distance.

Kenneth loves his uncle. Benn has "the magics", deep blue eyes, a transensual understanding of plants, a rare gift for self-description, the capacity to fall (truly) in love. His "eye sockets resembled a figure eight lying on its side and this occasionally . . . put strange thoughts into your head – like: This is the faculty of seeing itself; what eyes actually are for."

When Benn is well his face is "like the moon before we landed on it". But he isn't a holy fool. He isn't exactly innocent. He has terrestrial knowledge. Without this his lunar virginity wouldn't be worth much (it's the two together that put him in the Citizen of Eternity bracket). He is capable of making a disastrous second marriage, and he does (to the exquisite but anatomically ominous Matilda Layamon). He can fall from botanical grace, and he does (foaled far weeks by a *fake azalea*). He knows what it is to be immersed in *dukkha* (as Buddhists say), the quintessential unsatisfactoriness

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John Co. 116

Pearls and palettes at the ringside

Joanna Motion

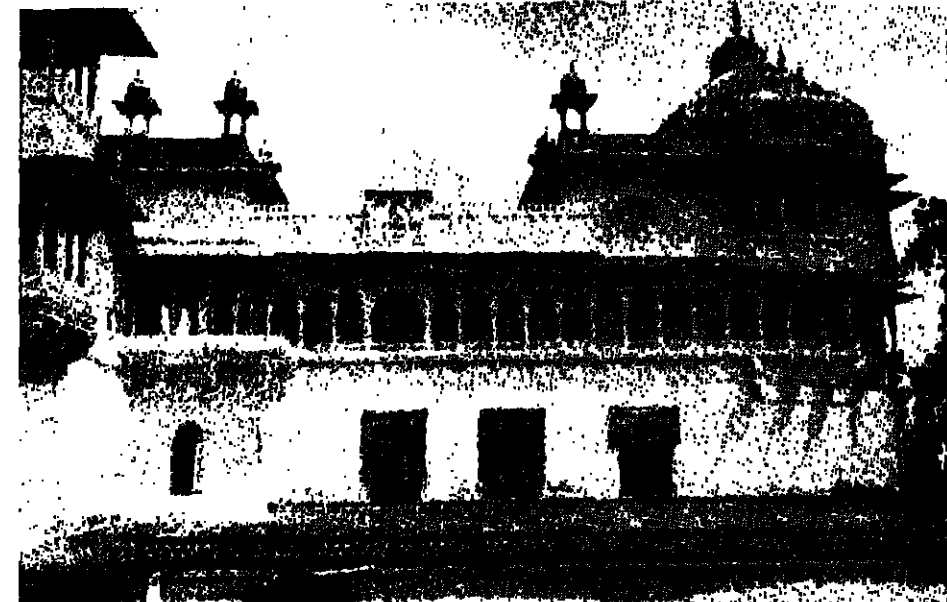
MARIAN FOWLER
Below the Peacock Fan: First Ladies of the Raj
337pp. Viking. £12.95.
0670807486

Details of Queen Victoria's accession reached Emily Eden in India, up-country. The young queen, she decided, was "a charming invention". Miss Eden did some charming inventing of her own and painted the Queen's portrait as a present for the eunuch Lion of the Punjab, Maharajah Ranjit Singh. "It has cost me much trouble to invent a whole queen, robes and all", she wrote home. News of Victoria's death, sixty-four years later, was received by her Viceroy in India, George Curzon, and his wife Mary — every bit as stately and a good deal more gorgeous than the widow at Windsor they represented. Victoria's reign is the bracket for the official duties of the four women whom Marian Fowler focuses on in *Below the Peacock Fan: First Ladies of the Raj* — Emily Eden, who accompanied her unmarried brother Lord Auckland during his Governor-Generalship, and Charlotte Canning, Edith Lytton and Mary Curzon, each the consort of a Governor-General or Viceroy.

For all of them, the experience of India, and of India at such an exalted level, was profound. The differences in their responses are marked not only by their own personalities and the nature of their association with the ruler of a subcontinent, but also by the astonishing changes taking place in the world during Victoria's reign. When the Edens set out for India, it was on a sea-voyage of five uncomfortable months; by the time the Curzons were appointed, the distance had contracted to an almost trifling three weeks. England's interest in India during Lord Auckland's service was

frankly commercial. The moral tone had risen several octaves in the intervening decades before Curzon is quoted as proclaiming "that our work is righteous and that it shall endure". Auckland had to handle sensitive decisions such as the treatment of Afghanistan — a recurring fiasco — without speedy recourse to the directors of the East India Company in London, while the coming of the telegraph moved the Writers' Building, Calcutta, appreciably closer to Whitehall.

Despite changing times and temperament — the portrait of Edith Lytton by G. F. Watts, in profile with her hair down, comes as a surprise after the tight-lacing of Charlotte Canning — the four "lady sahibs" had much in common. Like thousands of other European women in India, though to a degree exacerbated by their elevated standing, they found themselves sucked down into a treacle of lethargy by the combination of enervating climate and an excess of servants. They suffered from the separation from people and places they loved, half a world away, and from lack of privacy with the family at hand. Edith Lytton told her mother that the only time she saw her husband alone was in bed. It was their lot to be restricted to quintessentially "feminine" activities — watercolours, letter-writing and the receiving line — but to be intimate onlookers at some of the most startling events of the times. The combination makes for strange juxtapositions. "My pearls made their first appearance", Charlotte Canning writes in her journal, only four days before the ominous entry, "An outbreak has occurred at Meerut." Both Charlotte and "Clemency" Canning remained admirably calm amid bloodthirsty panic in both camps of the Indian Mutiny; but while George dealt with his wall of dispatch boxes, Charlotte warded off the horrifying reports coming out of Delhi, Cawnpore, Lucknow by unrelenting application to her palette.



An eighteenth-century wing of the Kota fort palace, from *The Rajput Palaces* reviewed below.

Only Emily Eden, pre-Victorian in sensibility as well as birth, uses the eminence of her position to see beyond the elephants and embroidery and egg-sized emeralds on the one side and the heat and famine and disense on the other. Marian Fowler quotes from *Up the Country*, the collected letters of Miss Eden to her sister:

"Twenty years ago no European had ever been here and there we were, with the band playing the 'Puritan'... and... observing that St. Cloup's Potage à la Julienne was perhaps better than his other soups... and all this in the face of those high hills, some of which have remained untrunked since the creation, and we, 105 Europeans, being surrounded by at least 3,000 mountaineers, who, wrapped in their hill blankets, looked on at what we call our polite amusements... I sometimes wonder they do not cut all our heads off, and say nothing more about it."

Dr Fowler has trouble with Miss Eden's ironic detachment. Fundamentally, Fowler sees the British Raj as an engagement of incompatible: Western reason versus Eastern intellect. She is attracted to the Viceroy's-eye view of this collision precisely because the women, with intuition and spontaneity allegedly on their side, ought to have had a better chance of tuning into the "real" India. Paradoxically, it is the coolly rational Emily Eden — the one of the four who least wanted to go — who has claim to an understanding of the

subcontinent's complexities and extremes and of the mutable nature of the British hold on it. It is perverse, too, for the author to assert that it was British women who humanized the Raj and gave it its heart, when she also subscribes to the widely held view that it was the arrival of the *memsahibs* which distanced the male officials from the country and people they administered, locking them into a rigid and inward-looking family life that owed everything to Bournemouth and nothing to Benares.

The idea of writing the story of these eminent Victorian women was an excellent one. Their time and place hold a special fascination for British readers, and their view at its ringside was privileged. In sections of seventy pages or so for each life, Fowler moves easily and readably through the vignettes and social set-pieces of this high domesticity. She has, naturally, been drawn to the more colourful representatives, and the dangers of this approach are sometimes evident in an over indulgence in lush romantic descriptions (spume and snarl of tigers and pungent male smells) and gossip. She is more at ease with the close-up than the broad view, and her judgment in the latter consequently wavers. Happily, however, these wearied but indefatigable women have left copious material in their letters, diaries and sketches, and to a selection of those Marian Fowler is an enjoyable guide.

Subtly stern

John A. C. Greppin

Urdu Letters of Mirza Asadu'llah Khan Ghalib
Translated and annotated by Daud Rahbar
628pp. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. \$48.50.
0887064124

Urdu is the principal language of Indian and Pakistani Muslims, and quite similar to Hindi, the principal language of north Indian Hindus. While Hindi has abundant loans from Sanskrit and is written in the *devanagari* script (for Hindi continues the Vedic culture), Urdu, using an Arabo-Persian script, has numerous loans from Arabic, the language of the Quran, and especially from Persian, which has been a big influence on Urdu cultural development. Both Hindi and Urdu come from the same source and are to a great extent mutually comprehensible.

Mirza Ghalib was the greatest of Urdu poets in mid-nineteenth-century India. He began his literary career writing verse in Persian, but though he admired Persian culture to the point of adopting its Shi'ite beliefs, it was Urdu verse that benefited from him most, and Ghalib who brought that verse to its highest point. Its most popular form was the *ghazal*, a love poetry the name of which is derived from the Arabic root *ghazala*, meaning "to flirt, to talk with women in a sexual way". Yet it is not love poetry that the lover rebuffed by a cruel and scornful woman. This woman is almost never represented as woman and sexual; rather she is the bringer of the pain of rejection, and the *ghazal* is the expression of this pain. Far different is

the Sanskrit tradition, and the Hindi poetry that grew out of it. Sanskrit love poetry can reveal intense joy and beauty; the woman is overwhelmingly desirable; the lover is successful; pleasure and delight ensue. Yet the *ghazal* can be very intense and compelling, especially if, as has been suggested, the beloved is actually a metaphor for God, from whom the poet bewails his separation, and to whom he longs to return, demonstrating a religious ardour strongly influenced by Sufi mysticism. God is then a sexual figure, which explains in part the intensity of Shi'ite religious conviction, and the curious force of Ghalib's own mystical *ghazals*.

The present volume contains 170 of Ghalib's letters, together with extensive commentaries on them by Daud Rahbar, the translator. The letters are addressed to a wide variety of people, many to his relatives in princely families and, later, to their children. Letters to his students have also survived, in which Ghalib analyses his own poetry and that of others. Most of the letters here are dated after 1838, because the violent counter-measures taken by the British after the Mutiny of 1857 led to great cultural losses in India, among them Ghalib's earlier letters. He discusses this time of travail, but is cautious about what he says, for by now he had become dependent on the British to pay him a pension.

But there is not much history in these letters; what they give us is the subtle, eloquent voice of a man who takes a stern but affectionate view of the day-to-day life around him, and comments to his relatives, clients, friends and pupils on what concerns him. Ghalib's prose has a beauty that is easily apparent in this translation, which presents us with a man from another age and culture for whom we quickly develop a great affection.

Pilgrims' progress

Richard Shannon

JOHN PEMBLE
The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South
312pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £27.50.
0198201001

When George Hyde Wollaston produced his book *The Englishman in Italy*, being a collection of *Verses written by some of those who have loved Italy*, published by the Clarendon Press at Oxford in 1909, he added a postscript, dated from Somerset on March 6 of that year:

The best wish that I can send with this little book, my nursing of many years, into the great world, is that sometimes a well-worn copy of it may be found among the chestnut-woods of Alp or Apennine, under the olive-trees of Valdarno or the orange-groves of Sorrento, in the shadow of the pyramid of Calus Cestius, or on the sands of the Mediterranean or Adriatic. *Adieu.*

The Englishman in Italy is a perfect, and in a sense conclusive, specimen of a literary genre which is one of the central themes of John Pemble's book. (It is a little unfortunate that Pemble seems not to know of it, in a study otherwise notable for its methodology of exhaustive published references.) It is conclusive in the way it expresses an awareness of a sense of an ending: none of his poets still lived. And it is conclusive also in the way it celebrates an Englishman's already obsolete ideal of Italy — an Italy on the brink of its Turkish war, already on the slide towards Fascism. It is perfect in its

heavily Victorian and Edwardian range of provenance: apart from a solitary Milton entry, and a sprinkling of Byron, Shelley, Tom Moore and early Wordsworth, Wollaston's selection is practically laboratory-pure in the authenticity of his contemporary taste. The Brownings of course are decidedly there, together with the right touches of Tennyson; and there are Landor and Clough and the Rossettis, and Longfellow, and even a snippet of J. H. Newman. But what gives Wollaston's arrangement its convincingly authentic quality is the fact that the largest number of entries is devoted to J. A. Symonds, with strong support from A. W. Hare, H. Lushington, S. T. Dobell, R. M. Milnes, F. D. Hemans, R. C. Trench, H. Taylor, F. Tennyson, J. R. Lowell, T. E. Brown and J. Baillie. How redolent, how evocative, how right are these names! They tell us of verses which are the poetical equivalent, so to speak, of the ubiquitous red Murray's Handbooks and Baedeker's Guides; all the correct sentiments, the accurately defined topographies, above all, the awareness of highly representative Victorian sensibilities reaching for lambent images of a South which reflected earnestly Northern purposes and preoccupations.

"Southward Bound" is Wollaston's first item from Symonds. And naturally it was Italy he evoked, just as Italy is bound to be the core of Pemble's book. There was Spain, there was the French Riviera, there was Greece, there was the Levant and the Holy Land, and there was Egypt and the North African littoral. But no

where on these shores was quite like Italy. Nowhere else combined such "intellectual patina, a cultural bloom" with the right degree of accessibility. "As we recede from the shores of our beloved Britain, and get farther from Boulogne and Paris and Brussels", as Frances Power Cobbe put it in 1864, "we leave behind us more of that class of tourists whose society cannot be said to convey any particular gratification...". The Alps were a social barrier, much like the railings of Hyde Park. The classic period of this genteel tourism was after the end of the very severe pains of horse-drawn and wind-driven locomotion which had in effect restricted the South to the aristocratic connoisseurship of the Grand Tour and before the onset of the early manifestations of cheap mass transportation and catering around the turn of the century. *The Mediterranean Passion* celebrates with taking relish that golden epoch of high-bourgeois tourist ascendancy.

It was a decidedly English ascendancy. No other European culture could supply so many people so ready, willing and able to tour. No other culture provided so many people with such decided opinions or purposes as to the merits and benefits of travel south. There were the old nostalgically classical purposes inherited from the past, renovated in the light of modern scholarship and modern archaeology. There were new purposes revealed in the brilliant explosion of north European interpretations of the Renaissance. We are here escorted deftly around such art-historical monuments as Mr Ruskin and Mr Symonds. There was a thirst in that religiously minded era to see, admire, fear and despise the magnificently decaying fabric of Roman Catholicism. There were occasions of empire, for which the Mediterranean was a convenient highway. There were those for whom the making of the new Italy was the greatest moral parable in the history of their time. (And these were the soonest disillusioned.) There was the quest for health. This is

one of the most interesting aspects of this book. Pemble guides us excellently amid Victorian medical theories and practices in the Mediterranean climates. There was the quest for Pan, most assiduously sought for, of course, among the homosexual communities. (It is a pity Pemble could not benefit from James Money's recent study of Capri.)

It all adds up to a fascinatingly comprehensive compendium of the Victorian age confronting its largest and nearest complex of culture and geography "abroad". It is naturally good on the lighter aspects of the English at large in this world: the Philistines set loose, the biblical bores unleashed, the erstwhile Risorgimento enthusiasts relapsing into equally unintelligent nostalgia for the old grand-ducal Tuscany or papal-governed Rome, the confident and unlovely inventors of the genus Wog and species Wop, the adulations of the guide-books that the tourist must never, in dress or deportment, be mistakable for anything other than an English man or woman. But Pemble is at his best when he guides us up the further reaches of that Victorian sensibility which, because of the sheer intensity it generated in itself, was fundamentally incapable of escaping from the subjective into the objective. "Denied a life of its own, the Mediterranean submitted to being re-created in the image of British longings and aversions, hopes and fears," Pemble quotes W. H. Mallock writing in the 1880s of the purpose of travel being fulfilled "when the world shows us our dreams and illusions reflected, instead of our dreams and illusions destroyed". Mallock continues:

The Victorians were able to achieve that quest, because their journey was as much a mission as an odyssey. The Mediterranean that they visited was neither real nor ideal, but a world made less than either by prejudice and preconception. It was a landscape that took its colour from their own emotions; an oracle that took its wisdom from their own expectations.

A poisonous trap

John Ward

MICHAEL DUFFY
Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower: The British expeditions to the West Indies and the war against Revolutionary France
426pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £37.50.
0198229658

During the conflict with France between 1793 and 1801 the West Indies accounted for roughly half of Great Britain's military expenditure, and perhaps three-quarters of its army casualties. However, until the recent work by David Geggus on the British occupation of St Domingue, late eighteenth-century warfare in this theatre had received little detailed investigation. The topic is now pursued further through Michael Duffy's valuable study of operations in the region as a whole.

There were two major British expeditions, in 1793-4 and 1795-6. By the end of the decade territorial gains included Martinique, St Lucia, Tobago, Dutch Guiana and Trinidad. These were modest successes, bought at a heavy price. Guadeloupe remained in French hands, St Domingue, originally the main objective, was on the way to becoming an independent black republic, and some 45,000 British troops had been lost, most of them through malaria or yellow fever. *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower* examines the causes of these disappointments. Bad luck, for example the storms that devastated the convoys of 1795-6 as they tried to sail out down the Channel, was fully reinforced by bad management. Henry Dundas's many other responsibilities prevented him from giving full attention to his business as war minister. In 1793 the Ordnance Office lacked proper information about the first expedition's requirements for supplies. In 1795 preparations were disrupted by an absurd inter-service dispute over the navy's right to discipline soldiers carried on its ships. Thus contingents reached the Caribbean ill-equipped, under strength and, worst of all, too late in the year, only a few weeks before the onset of the summer rains and the sickly season.

Yet on the whole British logistics were no more slipshod than in earlier and relatively successful Caribbean excursions. The crucial novelty of the 1790s was the introduction of radical politics to the West Indies. Previously colonial elites, anxious to keep their sugar estates intact and avoid disturbances among their slaves, had dared offer only token resistance to invasion by even a feeble ground force,

and in wartime the smaller islands at least could be taken easily by whoever commanded the sea. The British turned this point to their advantage during the Seven Years War; the French followed suit during the American War of Independence. Revolutionary principles put West Indian campaigning on a much less gentlemanly basis. Republican commissioners to the French islands removed the free coloureds' civil disabilities and liberated the slaves, enlisting dedicated allies for the patriotic cause. In 1795-6, before the British could carry the war to the enemy, they had to deal with French-inspired rebellion in some of their own colonies — on Grenada, from francophone planters and slaves, and on St Vincent, from the black Caribs. On St Lucia guerrilla bands held out in the mountainous interior until late 1797. Insufficient resources were left for operations against Guadeloupe, the remaining base of French resistance in the eastern Caribbean.

Michael Duffy's excellent account of the campaigns is concluded by a rather less convincing assessment of their strategic implications. Against the common view, that West Indian adventures were a costly distraction from the main effort against France in Europe, he argues that they served their essential purpose through securing British economic pre-eminence, to sustain military expenditure over the longer term. By the turn of the century France's Atlantic commerce had been ruined, while Great Britain dominated the international sugar trade. Nevertheless it is doubtful whether this outcome owed much to the expeditionary forces. Similar results could have been achieved more cheaply by naval blockade, and by allowing civil disorder on the French islands to run its course. During the 1790s British West Indian planters certainly prospered, but they did so above all through the elimination of their rivals on St Domingue by slave revolt, and this was largely achieved in 1791-2. Later gains in produce prices were offset by the wartime inflation of costs, affecting freight rates, insurance and the wages commanded by estate overseers. (The ravages of yellow fever became as much a deterrent to recruitment for the West Indies among civilians as among the military.) The conquered colonies accounted in 1800 for only about 6 or 7 per cent of Great Britain's foreign trade and, even without formal occupation, most of their business would in any case have come to Britain through maritime and commercial power. It is still difficult to see the West Indies in the 1790s as anything other than a poisonous trap for the British army.

A mode of civility

Alastair Hamilton

ANN THOMSON
Barbary and Enlightenment: European attitudes towards the Maghreb in the eighteenth century
173pp. Leiden: Brill. Hfl. 89.
9004 082755

North Africa has often been compared unfavourably with the rest of Islam. In the mid-sixteenth century the French scholar Guillaume Postel appreciated the Turks but deplored the Moors, "the most faithless and treacherous of the Muhammadans", and just under two hundred years later the English Arabist Simon Ockley regarded the nature of the North Africans as far inferior "to that of the polite Asiatics". Yet there was also a more benevolent approach. North Africa had provided a haven for many Arabs banished from Spain, the heirs of a glorious tradition of Muslim learning, and in the early seventeenth century Thomas Erpenius, the greatest Arabist of his day, was taught Arabic by a Moroccan of Andalusian origin and extolled the libraries of the Maghreb. In Morocco, Erpenius's successor as Professor of Arabic at Leiden, Jacob Golius, started to assemble what became the best collection of Arabic manuscripts in Northern Europe, to which students of Arab culture remain indebted to this day.

By the eighteenth century the hostile attitude of Christian Europe to Islam was being modified, and North Africa benefited from the change. "Enlightened" writers suggested that the Muslims were more virtuous and tolerant than the Christians and pointed to the countries of Africa and Asia in order to criticize Europe. Nevertheless there remained a practice in Barbary which nourished the old prejudices: piracy, the state of undeclared war between the Maghreb and Christendom, attended by the enslavement of Christian captives. Witnesses returned home with inflammatory reports which encouraged the formation of two myths, apparently opposed but with the same end. The first was that the

Maghreb was a traditionally Christian area: it had been a prolongation of Europe under the Romans and should become so once more. And the second was that the Maghreb was part of Africa, the home of savages who were in need of European enlightenment. In the first years of the nineteenth century, the very real attraction of North Africa, a region of immense agricultural resources providing a gateway to trade with the entire continent, was concealed under cover of the medieval ideal of a crusade, and the French could occupy Algeria in 1830 amid general applause.

In *Barbary and Enlightenment* Ann Thomson examines the manner in which enlightened views were gradually put to the service of a policy leading to colonialism, and how sympathy for Islam and admiration for the religious tolerance of the Ottoman Empire were replaced by prejudices exploited by the upholders of commercial expansionism. Although she quotes certain non-French observers (Rehinder, Thomas Shaw, William Shaler, Filippo Pananti and others) a weakness of her book is that it concentrates on the attitudes of French officials (like Laugier de Tassy, Venture de Paradis and the Marquis d'Argens), and these mainly to Algeria, from the early eighteenth century to the French invasion. The omission of Morocco belies the title and is hard to defend. The author simply tells us that Morocco "was more closed to outsiders and unwelcoming". She provides no evidence that this was so, and one man who would have disagreed was Joseph Addison's father, Lancelot. He was in Tangier in the 1660s, and in *West Barbary*, which he published on his return to England, he maintained that "what is commonly call'd Barbarous, is but a different Mode of Civility".

The inclusion of such views — and Addison was by no means unique — would have given a better impression of the continuity of opinions of the Maghreb as a whole and of the development of an enlightened approach to Islam at an earlier period. Because of its geographical and chronological limitations Ann Thomson's study, which contains much fascinating information, remains incomplete.

Questions for the defence

James Sherr

MICHAEL MCCGOWIE
Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy
530pp. Washington, DC: Brookings
Institution. \$39.95 (paperback, \$18.95).
081575552X

How are the military objectives of the Soviet Union to be discerned? Do the Soviets design their forces in response to their adversaries' vulnerabilities or their own? Is the threat we perceive always the threat intended? If anyone thinks that the answers to these questions are simple, Michael McGowie's book will make him think again.

The layman may be surprised to discover that answers can be provided from evidence rather than guesswork: not only the "hard" evidence of military exercises, equipment programmes and the forces themselves but a compendious Soviet literature on "military doctrine" and "military art". The measure of McGowie's stamina, talent and expertise is his ability to pull twenty years of evidence to bits and reassemble it into a coherent pattern.

The specialist in Western defence policies mistrusts coherent explanations; the specialist in Soviet defence policy requires them. Thanks to their Clausewitzian heritage, the Soviets aim to ensure that defence policy remains policy rather than "policy outcome" (or fudging). Thanks to their Leninist heritage, they know how to.

McGowie's major thesis is that the Soviet Armed Forces are designed for the contingency of fighting a world war: fighting, not merely deterring. Thanks to their harsh schooling in the reality of war, "the Soviet emphasis has always been on defence through war fighting rather than simply on inflicting punishment". His minor thesis is that, in 1967, the Soviet Union's "hierarchy of objectives" shifted from waging nuclear war to waging war below the nuclear threshold, and from surviving the devastation of Russia to avoiding it.

These post-1966 requirements are, in fact, more ambitious than those they replace. Forces designed for pre-emption at the outset of war can be of the use-once-and-throw-away

variety. Forces designed to prosecute war and survive it must be sustainable. These forces must also deny access to the United States which, like Britain in 1940, might choose to go on fighting after eviction from the European continent. They must therefore establish a defence perimeter north-west to Greenland, west to the Canaries and along the line of the Sahara, south-west to the Horn, south to the Gulf and east to include Manchuria, and the Liaun-tung Peninsula. The contingency is judged serious enough to justify, among other measures, the peacetime pre-positioning of 2,600 tanks in Libya (whose small armed forces, needless to say, cannot possibly make use of them all).

It would be unfortunate if this analysis were held hostage to all the lessons drawn from it. McGowie's overriding concern is that we should not confuse the contingency (world war) with the objective, which is to avoid war. This said, however, the Soviets also have other objectives (weakening imperialism), and they "firmly believe in the political leverage that stems from military power". Having acknowledged these truths, McGowie carries on almost as if he had not. He refers only rarely to the policy of "peaceful coexistence" and does not define it. Avoiding war is a component of this policy and, without doubt, its better half. But "peaceful coexistence" is also a policy for pursuing "the struggle" by all means short of war, military means included. There is much to ponder in the fact that Military Transport Aviation, designed for the global war contingency, was enlisted to a very different cause in Angola and the Ogaden, and to decisive effect. But McGowie does not ponder it.

McGowie readily acknowledges the Soviet belief in Socialism's expansion but shies away from acknowledging the commitment. In workaday terms, Soviet penetration in the Third World is presented as a pursuit of traditional needs (raw materials, "influence") and defensive concerns (deflecting American power). No mention here of the Politburo adviser's comment to Mitterrand (at the time of Angola) that, after America's defeat in Vietnam, capitalism was in its greatest postwar crisis, nor of the frequent refrain that "détente and the national liberation struggle are two parts of an ever widening revolutionary offensive". At-

ways convincing when discussing periods of Soviet pessimism (for example 1980-3), McGowie treats Soviet optimism as if it were little more than a diminished pessimism. The mentality of the Soviet arms negotiator who told Paul Nitze that what he found unreasonable in Soviet proposals today, he would, given the changing correlation of forces, be pleased to accept tomorrow, is not a mentality that McGowie comes to terms with.

McGowie's second concern is with a war danger à la Sarajevo (runaway crisis), "deterred" by an alliance obsessed with the lessons of Munich (wilful aggression). In crisis, powers which base their defence on a strategy of offence (Germany in 1914 and the Soviet Union today), may reach a point where they cease to think about avoiding war and begin to be governed by railway timetables. At such a point, "a Soviet drive into Western Europe would be responding to a strategic imperative and not some 'urge to aggression' that could be turned back by threat of punishment". Does the former matter, and does the latter follow? Should Nato be concerned with the "urge" to aggression or with the danger of it? Would the Soviets perceive a "strategic imperative" in attacking Europe if it meant their destruction? For that matter, had imperial Germany been certain of British involvement, would it have been more hesitant in attacking France or less?

Rather than invest more in deterrence and "crisis management", McGowie would ask that we invest in policies designed to make war less likely and to convince the Soviets that we mean to do the same. But how do we convince them of what we mean? In the past, when fears have not materialized, the Soviets have not

reassessed the opponent's intentions, but his strengths. The result has not always been a more amenable Soviet Union. On McGowie's own evidence it was not American reassurances that persuaded the Soviet Union to co-operate in ending the October 1973 war, but the global alert of US forces; it was not the low American profile that made the Soviets cautious in the Third World in the early 1970s but Kissinger's refusal to rule out a nuclear response to "out of area" conflicts. It was not US bellicosity that reversed this trend but Congressional adamance that there be "no more Vietnams".

McGowie convincingly portrays the wartime logic behind "the Soviet buildup", but not the peacetime logic. He grasps the ambivalences in the Soviet temperament, but not the tenacity or the animus behind it. His strictures against Western stereotyping are themselves stereotyped ("worst case thinking" is not always wrong nor always practised). He reminds us of Soviet fears. But any power out to achieve a "fundamental restructuring" of the international order should have fears, no matter how prudently it goes about it. In these circumstances the compelling but elusive challenge is to devise policies which take account of Soviet interests and realize Western ones.

Better off as we are with a pessimistic Soviet Union than an optimistic one, Michael McGowie's book is convincing testimony that we would be imperilled by a desperate one. While far from the centre ground, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy* deserves to become the centrepiece of debate, and no doubt it will. If its arguments manage to rattle some cages, that will be no bad thing either.

Claiming national insurance

Martin Ceadel

LAWRENCE J. VALE
The Limits of Civil Defence in the USA,
Switzerland, Britain and the Soviet Union: The
evolution of policies since 1945
268pp. Macmillan. £29.50.
0333415639

Civil defence is the least discussed aspect of defence in the nuclear age. In spite—or perhaps because—of the way it exposes the central contradiction of deterrence. The use of nuclear weapons is generally said by the governments which possess them to be unthinkable; they exist only to deter: from which it follows that civil defence is redundant. But they will deter only if there is some possibility of their being used: from which it follows that civil defence is required to make deterrence credible against another nuclear-armed state. How states cope with this contradiction is highly revealing of their military traditions and political systems; yet most of the literature on this subject is polemical, whether pro or anti, and focused on only one country.

Lawrence Vale is to be congratulated on seeing the possibilities of a study of civil defence which is both dispassionate and comparative. From a survey of the literature on his chosen countries, he identifies four justifications for civil defence which, either explicitly or implicitly, are always put forward. The first and most obvious is "humanitarian": the provision of the man in the street with life-boats, seat-belts or—the commonest analogy of all—insurance. But even in the Soviet Union, where a major civil defence effort has been made since 1961, the premium on an effective humanitarian policy seems in practice too high and its assured benefit too meagre for this justification alone to be plausible.

A more limited second goal, "State survival", is therefore used: as well as the mass shelters in the basements of Soviet apartment blocks, which the ordinary Russian suspects may turn out to be mass coffins, the Kremlin has its own tube station for rapid escape to what may be presumed to be much superior protection. Yet, though easier to achieve, concentration on the survival of the government and key sectors of the economy merely provokes the E. Z. Thompsons of this world to ask searching questions about the purpose of the State.

The third and fourth justifications are strategic. The "deterrence" justification comes in two forms. When used by a nuclear-armed state, the claim is that civil defence enhances the ability to deter a state which can retaliate in kind. But it also enhances a first-strike capacity, and can therefore be criticized—as the Soviet programme is by the United States—for having a destabilizing effect. When used by a non-nuclear and neutral power such as Switzerland, the claim is that civil defence, especially when linked to a scorched-earth policy, can reduce the already minor gains to be expected from an attack and thus produce "deterrence by denial". This argument is harder to find fault with, and helps explain the importance which the Swiss attach to civil defence, but it is of no use to great powers. The final justification is "crisis management": mass evacuation into shelters can signal resolve in a crisis; but for economic reasons such measures could not be sustained for long and, if terminated, would produce an embarrassing change of signal.

Vale offers a full and balanced explanation of why civil-defence policies differ from country to country; but one factor is worth singling out here—the lesson drawn from the Second World War. Because the British rode out the Blitz without resort to mass air-raid shelters (other than the London tube for a small minority), they continue to adopt a stay-put and self-help policy: indeed, a 1981 government booklet recommends the householder to acquire something indistinguishable from the Morrison shelter of forty years previously. Because the Swiss mobilized their population, mined their tunnels and bridges, and survived Hitler almost unscathed, they continue to believe in the efficacy of deterrence by denial. Because the Soviet Union lost 20-25 million dead and still emerged victorious, its notion of what constitutes unacceptable losses differs from that of the West, which helps to explain why it considers civil defence worthwhile. And because the United States did not experience direct attack, it has no philosophical grounding for its present policy, which therefore oscillates wildly between optimistic maximalism, such as Kennedy's shelter programme (or Reagan's SDI as originally conceived), and resigned acceptance of mutual assured destruction.

Lawrence Vale's book is a model for published doctoral theses and a worthy tribute to its first supervisor, the late Hedley Bull.

Kinds of control

John Ryle

NORMAN E. ZINBERG
Drug, Set and Settling: The basis for controlled
intoxicant use
277pp. Yale University Press. £10.95.
030031106

MICHAEL GOSSOP
Living with Drugs
242pp. Wildwood House. £15 (paperback,
£10.95).
0704530880

GEOFFREY PEARSON, MARK GILMAN and
SHIRLEY McIVER
Young People and Heroin: An examination of
heroin use in the north of England
65pp. Aldershot: Gower. £12.50.
056563888

ANTHONY HENMAN, ROGER LEWIS and TIM
MALYON
Big Deal: The politics of the illicit drug business
211pp. Pluto. Paperback, £4.50.
0745300081

VIRGINIA BERRIDGE and GRIFFITH EDWARDS
Opium and the People: Opiate use in 19th-
Century England
370pp. Yale University Press. Paperback,
£8.95.
0300308046

MAREK KOJIN
Narcomania: On heroin
176pp. Faber. Paperback, £3.95.
05714506X

BEN WHITTAKER
The Global Connection: The crisis of drug
addiction
432pp. Cape. £16.
022422453

On the fraught subject of psychotropic drugs, beyond the headlines and the heartfelt platitudes, there are lines of inquiry that promise, if not a solution to the problems we have, at least some useful ways to think about them. In the current slew of books one or two are publishers' by-blows: timely, topical, hard-hitting, wide-ranging, soon expiring on an overdose of alarm. Others are more modest and more rigorous. Dealing variously with the history of British opiate use, the current spread of heroin in the north of England, the international drug trade and the controlled use of opiates, hallucinogens and marijuana in the United States, they offer a cooler view, contributing, *inter alia*, to a critical examination of the weasel words—"addiction", "abuse", "drug", itself—so often used as though their meaning were unproblematic.

That such scrutiny is necessary may be illustrated by the following advertisement, versions of which recently occupied a full page in each issue of the *New York Times*. It was placed by the government-sponsored organization, Partnership for a Drug-free America, and addressed to managers and Chief Executive Officers: "If a drug-user works for you", it runs,

you don't have an alternative. You're involved. And that's hard. Because what truly helps an addict isn't sympathy. You have to be firm. And tough. And give him a choice that may seem heartless. Get well or get out. By confronting the addict, you force him to confront his own problems. And make a decision. It won't be easy. But there's a very good chance he'll agree to start treatment.

Note that the "drug-user" in the first of these sentences has become an "addict" by the fourth. A few lines later he is sick; he is told to get well. Next he has a "problem" which he has to "confront". So he needs "treatment". Medical necessity and psychotherapeutic obligation are fused. And you, his boss, have an obligation too: to turn him in. Not, it seems, because his work is suffering, but because he uses drugs, *tout court*. You are not told what kind of drug this person uses, or what the symptoms of his illness are, or why it is a problem to him or his employer. The picture in the advertisement shows a healthy-looking well-dressed middle-aged man staring out of an office window. It is not clear whether he is intent to represent the boss or the drug-user. Perhaps this is deliberate. Most people are drug users. It could be your colleague. It could be you.

To question the use of language in such an announcement, which offers an unusually concentrated example of the confusion and elision in much contemporary discussion of drugs, is

not to deny that there is a drug problem (or, to put it less monolithically, that there are problems associated with drug use), or that the number of people who have problems with drugs is increasing. It is rather to question coercive assumptions about the proper response to these problems and the use of undefined concepts of addiction and disease to characterize them. We must not assume that such concepts are deployed carelessly or unthinkingly: large amounts of time and money will certainly have been spent on reformulating those short sentences in order to convey—one may speculate—the desired tone of toughness tempered with compassion, moral righteousness laced with therapeutic concern. But the care is cosmetic, rhetorical in the pejorative sense. The sentences are emotive but enigmatic, polished to opacity.

In America, where drug control is high on the political agenda, researchers in the field tend, as Norman Zinberg explains in *Drug, Set and Settling*, to be labelled as either for or against drugs. Because Dr Zinberg's research is on the possibility of the sustained non-compulsive use of certain drugs, including heroin, that are generally considered beyond the pale, he is, from the point of view of hard-line opponents of drug use, in the pro-drug camp. For this reason it is unlikely that his advice was solicited by the Drug-free America campaign. This is a pity, as his rather ponderous book, the fruit of many years' research, demonstrates what has been obscured by the lurid reputation of heroin: the importance of personality and state of mind and social and physical context ("set" and "settling") in determining whether or not an individual can handle the drug that is, not become its slave.

The ideas of "set" and "settling", which were introduced by Timothy Leary in the 1960s to explain variations in the effects of cannabis and LSD and are now commonplace in psychopharmacology, have been extended across the boards by Zinberg, as the determinants of patterns of long-term use of all psychotropic drugs, including the phenomenon of opiate dependence. One of the most striking pieces of evidence for his hypothesis is the case of American soldiers in the Vietnam war. A startling 20 per cent of enlisted men became addicts in Vietnam. To cope with the problem, treatment and rehabilitation centres were set up at United States army bases. These were generally agreed to be complete failures: servicemen often used more heroin in rehabilitation programmes than when on active duty. Yet on return to the United States nine out of ten of them simply gave it up. They were like patients given opiates for painful operations in hospital: once their ordeal was over they could do without them. Either that or it was too difficult to get hold of the drugs at home. Or both. Either explanation implies that addiction may be circumstantial, that in itself it is not quite so dire as we may imagine.

Zinberg does not eschew the word "addict", but he shows how difficult it is to provide a satisfactory definition of the concept, so often loosely applied to users of drugs and invoked, with the best intentions, as a scare tactic by those who wish to discourage experimentation. The analysis of successive World Health Organization pronouncements on "physical dependence" and "psychological dependence" which counterpoints his surveys and case-studies, illustrates this difficulty. No one denies that the use of opiates can very easily lead to physical dependence, in the minimal sense of withdrawal symptoms—sweating, cramps, sweating and diarrhoea—when a user stops. But placebo experiments have induced addiction to substances which have no pharmacological effect at all. The subjects of such an experiment may even continue to be addicted after they are told it is a placebo they are taking. Cocaine, on the other hand, is not physically addictive in the sense of producing visible withdrawal symptoms, but the craving it induces can be very strong: some people who use cocaine will do almost anything to go on getting it. Clearly they are "psychologically dependent" on it, but this phrase doesn't distinguish drugs from anything else we have a tendency to like a lot: money, power and so on. The indeterminacy may be significant: morally speaking, the desire to take drugs is not that different from other desires, desires for sensual and spiritual gratification, that do not come

under forensic attention. And proper accounts of addiction must incorporate this fact. Most authorities now agree that the difficulty of kicking heroin has been exaggerated, not least by addicts and ex-addicts themselves. The difficult thing, in the words of the authors of *Young People and Heroin*, is not getting off but staying off, that is, resisting the temptation to start using and become addicted again. This, it is reasonable to argue, is more a moral than a medical problem.

It would be a good thing if the concept of addiction were delivered from its medical captivity and restored to ordinary language without the false air of precision it has acquired through its sojourn in learned journals. In the new edition of his *Living with Drugs* (first published in 1982), which is perhaps the best book currently available on the subject, Michael Gossop puts it like this:

addiction as a form of depravity is no longer as fashionable as it once was. It is now more acceptable to say that the addict is sick. But in itself drug addiction is neither sickness nor moral depravity. Addictions are habits and as such they may be regarded as being good or bad according to what they help us do or what they interfere with our doing.

This is not salon talk. Dr Gossop works in the front line of drug abuse at the Maudsley Hospital in London. Of course, neither he nor Zinberg is recommending the use of heroin or any other drug. Nor are they libertarians, who think people should be allowed to go to hell in their own way. Nor moral relativists. But they think that attempts to control drug use are not well served by talking as if drugs were the devil. The damage opiates do is not inevitable; otherwise they would not be used medically. Their capacity for damage can be minimized by intelligent use. There is a minority of users that heroin does not screw up. Doctors know this for the good reason that ever since the isolation of morphine from opium in the early nineteenth century, theirs has been the single

profession with the highest number of opiate addicts. (Michael Gossop cites the case of Dr William Stewart, founder of the Johns Hopkins Medical School, a lifelong, happily married, 200mg-a-day morphine addict who died, full of honours, at the age of seventy.) That addicted doctors—some, not all—manage to use the drug in a manner consistent with a decent life demonstrates, it may be argued, the virtues of a medical education, clean needles and a pharmaceutically pure drug supply. It also shows that it helps to have something else going in your life besides the drug, such as a job. Zinberg argues that this is one of the most important factors distinguishing controlled users of drugs from profligate ones. So the first step to a drug-free America is probably not to threaten your employee with the sack.

Having a job, unfortunately, was never an option for most of the young English men and women described in *Young People and Heroin*. It is ironic that alcohol, the archetypal drug of abuse, should be giving way among the unemployed in some northern cities to heroin, which, since it does not affect motor skill, is, unlike alcohol, quite compatible with productive work. But, as Pearson *et al* explain, the getting and consuming of heroin can themselves become a full-time occupation, a substitute employment, one that fills the days. This is what makes addiction addictive. Even if some of Zinberg's subjects seem to be able to handle heroin, it doesn't follow that anyone can; least of all young people with nothing else going for them. In Manchester, on Merseyside, the setting is unemployment, the set is rage and humiliation. And the drug is the one thing that, in the words of one user, "makes you feel dead pleasant".

Young People and Heroin, which was commissioned by the Health Education Council, is a well-researched book, which analyses with admirable dispassion the practical difficulties of working in demoralized communities where

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high unemployment coincides with a plentiful supply of cheap, seductive, addictive narcotics. Without taking sides, the authors discuss the lack of coordination between helping agencies, the conflicts between law enforcement and community control and the controls that heroin users themselves manage to develop. Grim as the picture is, it does suggest that heroin is not quite the threat to teenage well-being and public order that current newspaper coverage would suggest. "In one area of Manchester," the authors report,

where there was a well-established pattern of heroin misuse among people in their early twenties, a local residents' association informed us that among young adolescents the major problem was rowdy behaviour in the streets after drinking cider.

Let us, like Pearson *et al.*, keep a straight face over the cider problem. Alcohol abuse is still a much greater threat to everybody's well-being than heroin. As Ben Whitaker puts it in a staccato burst of data in his *The Global Connection*, alcohol is the world's most widely used psychotropic drug, with more dependents than any other (three quarters of a million in Britain, ten million in the United States), causing more deaths than murder and playing a part in over 50 per cent of violent crime. And its use is growing more rapidly than that of other drugs. The stuff should obviously be banned at once. As we know, this has been tried with a certain amount of success in some Islamic countries, but with rather less in America and Finland and Norway. In the West, laws against opiates have sometimes worked, but laws against alcohol never have. Because alcohol, too, makes you feel dead pleasant.

The effect of Prohibition, the doomed attempt to create an America safe for teetotalers, was, according to Zinberg, actually to exacerbate the alcohol problem in the United States. The Volstead Act created a speakeasy ambience where alcohol replaced food. Drinking was coloured by illegality and the expectation of violence. "The repeal of prohibition," he writes, "left society without inherited means of social control." For Zinberg, despite the very different history of drugs such as heroin and cocaine in American society, the principle is the same: social control, controlled use, is more effective than prohibition and stigmatization. On this view the current American war on drugs, an altogether larger-scale affair than Prohibition, extending from the streets of the inner cities through the pages of the *New York Times* to the remotest areas of the Andean republics and thus affecting foreign as well as domestic policy, is drastically misconceived.

The three well-informed and theoretically sophisticated essays on the politics of illicit drugs that comprise *Big Deal* suggest that the United States government offensive is doomed to defeat on other grounds. The American consumer's passion for psychotropic novelty is matched by the dependence of the supplier countries on drug dollars. According to Anthony Henman, the author of one of these essays, the political systems of Colombia and Bolivia (one could add some Caribbean countries to this list), no matter what their position on the left/right political spectrum, are "governed by a legal and ideological need to appear to be suppressing [their] principal economic activity, the production of illicit drugs". Hypocrisy and greed rule on both sides. And need, on the part of the peasantry involved in coca cultivation. Certainly the vast expenditure on narcotics diplomacy, crop substitution and military operations against growers and processors of coca seems to have had no significant effect on the influx of cocaine into America, just as similar policies in Asia have only temporarily affected heroin trafficking. A drug-free America seems as far off as a drunk-free America.

Alcohol, of course, is written into Western culture in a way that coca derivatives and opiates are not. As Michael Gossop puts it, "vast areas of Europe are covered by vines". Heroin is not yet a hundred years old, but we will shortly be celebrating the millennium of the discovery of distillation. To say that we have domesticated alcohol, however, as is sometimes argued - that we have evolved appropriate rituals and controls around it - is no more than to say that we accept the damage it causes. This usually means that we conceal the damage. And the exoticism of opiates in comparison to alcohol can be exaggerated.

There was a time in Britain, when at the lower levels of society opiate addiction was accepted as a commonplace vice, in Charles Kingsley's phrase, a "pennyworth of elevation", certainly less of a problem than drink. An exemplary study by Virginia Berridge and Griffith Edwards, *Opium and the People* (first published in 1981 and now in a new edition), describes the growth in use of opium and opiate-based patent medicines during the course of the nineteenth century and the gradual establishment of medical and legal controls over them. Opiate use, they argue, though a cause of alarm among the élites of Victorian Britain, had in fact reached a point of equilibrium, where social ill-effects, apart from a small rise



Photograph © David Hoffman

in mortality levels, were negligible. Nevertheless Britain and other Western societies moved away from reliance on informal control to what Berridge and Edwards term a "complex, rigid, anxious, punitive and absolute system of formal control" involving the Dangerous Drugs acts, imprisonment for illegal possession and the maintenance system for registered addicts. Meanwhile the medical profession itself came increasingly under Home Office control, and Home Office policy was brought into line with international treaties on drug control.

Despite the sharply critical tone of their analysis, Berridge and Edwards do not advocate the dismantling of these controls. The argument from history, they suggest, is that the nineteenth-century pharmaceutical idyll, such as it was, cannot be regained. What they call the progressive "weakening of culture" in industrial societies persuades them that new modes of control are indeed necessary. But not necessarily the exact ones we have. They describe our present vision of drug control as "too frightened and too mechanistic", and suggest that informal controls already exist, for instance among adolescents experimenting with drugs, to a greater extent than is generally acknowledged. It is a pity that there have not been more historical and anthropological studies of drug use along the lines of *Opium and the People*. The current shift in human affairs, the drastic acceleration of history that we are living through, may encourage the notion that there are no precedents. Such a lack of perspectives can only provoke more excess - often in the use of drugs and the reaction to them.

In *Narcomania* Marek Kohn employs a historical perspective derived from Berridge and Edwards in a critical account of attitudes towards the opiate we love to hate. "Heroin," writes Kohn, "is like a creature scuttling across a dimly lit floor: the shadow more massive, frightening than the real thing." *Narcomania* is a clever book, hip to a fault, which offers a switch-back ride through the history of thought and a slashing critique of current press coverage of drugs. Kohn also has some original things to say on the psychology of addiction. His opinion of heroin seems to be that it is a pathological variant on a class of drugs that other societies have been used beneficially. Heroin, he writes, is an opiate "optimized for twentieth-century needs for instant gratification and sudden impact".

There is something in this idea. Much modern drug use seems to be oriented to the quick fix, cutting down ingestion time, getting higher faster. This tendency, along with other modern difficulties with drugs, can be traced to technological innovations introduced in the nineteenth century, notably the hypodermic syringe and the extraction of the active principles of opium and cocaine. The hypodermic use of morphine had begun to be perceived as a problem by the end of the nineteenth century, but oral preparations were still the rule. Cocaine, although first isolated from coca leaves in 1860, only began to be used recreationally in the 1890s, and then in America, not in England. The spread of nineteenth-century drug technologies into the world had to wait until after the First World War. Now they are everywhere. Drug control has been internationalized, as Berridge and Edwards stress, and so has the drug trade. The scale is certainly unprecedented. Empires of greed link Colombia and Pakistan to Wall Street and the Cayman Islands to Switzerland. As new modes of ingestion metabolize drugs quicker, new technology of communications facilitates absorption of the profits of the drug trade into the world financial system.

It is, as the title of Ben Whitaker's book recognizes, a global problem. The escalation in world drug use, legal and illegal, recorded in *The Global Connection* is awe-inspiring. Drug consumption seems to outpace growth in every other area of human enterprise, except the arms trade. Whitaker is properly exercised about the change of scale: the huge glut of benzodiazepine tranquilizers - valium and librium - now the world's most prescribed drugs; the terrible violence and institutional power of drug-smuggling gangs; the waste of human resources in drug addiction among young people; the incoherence of official drug policies. But compared to Berridge and Edwards he is lacking in historical perspective and analytical grip. *The Global Connection* is a patchwork of a book, packed with miscellaneous facts - and dates and quotations - of varying degrees of plausibility covering every drug there is. Examples: an average of thirty-five microgrammes of cocaine adheres to every bank note in Miami; cocaine is sold in Cairo ground up with human bones; growing opium poppies is legal in Britain, but harvesting them is not; sniffer dogs get addicted to heroin, so in Germany they are experimenting with wild boars; methadone was originally called dolophine, in honour of Adolf Hitler; the word "heroin" comes from *herosisch*, meaning heroic, mighty. (Perhaps we should abandon the word heroin, with its accumulation of false glamour and use the original scientific name: diamorphine hydrachloride.)

A book which contains so many facts is bound to contain errors too. Examples: Rush and Hardware are brand names for amyl nitrite, not slang names; "China White", in New York street parlance, means heroin, not alpha methyl fentanyl; a *houngan* is a priest of Haitian voodoo, not a name for the religion itself; inhaling heroin fumes is called "chasing the dragon" not "smoking the dragon"; the mixture of ether and chloroform sprayed on passers-by in Brazilian carnival is not called "lanca" but *lança-perfume*. There are also problems of tone: "Hippies in kaftans were fazed by Sergeant Pepper", we are told. "Acid, hash, love-beats [sic] and speed were sold openly to rolling and stoned hippies at flower-power rock festivals" and "Jazz-players frequently relish what were called 'naughty-type African woodbines'". The book does not seem to have had the benefit of editing. It is not necessarily the publisher's fault if Whitaker sounds like a non-up vicar, but in an account of the world drug problem it would be reasonable to expect at least one map.

The Global Connection raises many questions and answers none with conviction. From the practical point of view the most important question is this: do laws against drugs cause more damage than they prevent? Nobody really likes these laws. Every one would prefer some other means of control. Even the hidden persuaders of the Drug-free America campaign skirt round the question of illegality. Laws against drugs are embarrassing because they work so badly. And besides, not working, they encourage crime: trade is delivered into the hands of traffickers, and otherwise law-

abiding citizens become criminals. Laws against drugs overload the penal system and tend to corrupt the police. And they bleed the taxpayer, whereas legal drugs fill the exchequer. These considerations may tip the balance against new laws. But are they grounds for repealing existing ones? As Berridge and Edwards ask, who is prepared to take this risk? The libertarian has to accept that decriminalization will mean, at the very least, an increase in consumption of the drug in question, which means an increase in drug casualties (though in the improved atmosphere of legality this increase might be proportionately less). Legalization would not necessarily take the drug trade out of the realm of crime: gambling, for example, is legal in Nevada but it is still controlled by the Mafia. And smuggling may not stop either: contraband liquor from the South is big business in New York; black-market cigarettes are the rule in Italy. The challenge is to decriminalize without increasing availability. No one has worked out how to do that.

Problems of legal control are one thing; sources of moral authority are another. These days doctors are the first to say that medicine does not have the last word on psychotropic drugs, that modes of control must be sought elsewhere. But we cannot get away that easily: the medical model has infiltrated itself into our thinking and left everything lop-sided. The metaphor of disease permeates our moral language. Repeatedly we read in *The Global Connection*, for instance, that the rise in drug use is a plague, an epidemic; that the habitual user of illicit drugs is suffering from a sickness. (The association of illicit drugs and disease is insidiously reinforced by the role of shared syringes as vectors of the AIDS virus among users of injectable drugs.) Although we know, thanks to common sense as well as to Norman Zinberg, that the effect of drugs is interactive, varying with person and circumstance, we still speak as though they had fixed mood-changing functions. Speaking of "drug abuse" we even manage to imply that it is the drug, wrrenched from its proper medical application, that suffers, rather than the mind and body of the user.

There is, in any case, no advantage in winning back psychotropic drugs from medical hegemony unless they can be incorporated into some other, subtler moral system. A return of old virtues like self-restraint and moderation and thrift would be in order: a revival in the deferred gratification sector, under a new dispensation that did not depend on the blanket prohibitions of puritanism. Ideas about drugs, about addiction and dependence, need to be incorporated in a wider field of thought about alimentation, which would include our inordinate consumption of food drugs like sugar and chocolate, things we have a tendency to like more than is good for us. We also need to take account of the great reordering of pleasure within Western culture that has been a feature of our time. The rules of this moral transformation are not yet clear, but drugs have a special role in it. The growth of uncontrolled drug use is a symptom of moral disorganization; it is also a refuge from it. In the mass flight from ordinary states of mind, the greed for new moods, there may be beyond the mere desire for ease, some collective recollection of the important role many societies have accorded to drugs in religious consciousness and in ceremonies of collective well-being. As William James wrote of alcohol in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: "The drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness, and our total opinion of it must find its place in our opinion of that larger whole."

The old-established cultures that find themselves juxtaposed in the modern world system have accorded this role to a wide variety of psychotropic drugs. We have taken the drugs and elaborated them, but forgone the value systems. We have to remedy this: in order to establish effective modes of control over the use of drugs it may be that we must start by emphasizing, not their destructive capacity, but their potential for good.

The Cocaine Connection: Two against the drug trade by Brian and Allison Milgate, who found themselves involved with drug-mugglers in Southern India, has recently been published by Chatto and Windus (250pp; £10.95, 0 7011 3011 3).

Insufficiently self-upbraiding

Pat Rogers

PETER S. BAKER, THOMAS W. COPELAND, GEORGE M. KAHL, RACHEL MCCLELLAN AND JAMES M. OSBORN (Editors)
The Correspondence of James Boswell
Research Edition, Volume Four:
Correspondence with David Garrick, Edmund Burke and Edmund Malone
480pp. Heinemann. £40.
0 434 83702 4

Boswell kept his journal from private compulsion, but he wrote letters in the same dilatory, inconsequential way the rest of us do. So far it has been the trade edition of his papers which has scooped up the juicy bits of his career: high jinks in London, encounters with the great on his Grand Tour, the on/off affair with Belle de Zuylen, servitude and grandeur in politics or at the Bar, above all his relationship with Johnson. By comparison the research edition has limped along, with no narrative momentum and a smaller human canvas. Nevertheless, the volume devoted to the correspondence with John Johnson (1966) had the interest of mainly fresh letters, together with sustained personal contact. The correspondence with members of the Club (1976) brought into due prominence Boswell's dealings with figures such as Bennet Langton and Thomas Percy. And Cor-

respondence relating to the Making of the "Life of Johnson" (1969) possessed a real coherence and independent value.

This new volume has less to command attention, for reasons that are both intrinsic and extrinsic. Boswell was not on uniformly good terms with either Garrick or Burke. The actor's letters were too scrappy and easy-going to bring out the true vein of intense self-analysis at which Boswell excelled. Besides, Garrick's side of the exchanges has been well edited among his own published correspondence. As for Burke, he felt an understandable urge to keep Boswell at arm's length, partly as a defence against the mania for leaking personal items to the press which he recognized in Boswell, and partly to cover his embarrassment in the face of increasingly unrealistic bids for patronage. Boswell was able to convince himself that he ought to be Lord Advocate (Henry Erskine, brother of the future Lord Chancellor, was unaccountably preferred) or, failing that, Solicitor-General for Scotland, if necessary in a joint capacity. Burke admitted to being "little consulted about the arrangements of Scotland", and blandly advised Boswell to pay his court to the fat cat Henry Dundas. Again Burke's letters have already been well edited, though in any case Boswell's hesitant overtures are the more revealing.

It is the correspondence with Malone which dominates this volume, in quantity and in qual-

ity. The letters contain some bitchy asides on Mrs Piozzi: "She is a little artful impudent malignant Devil. She relates that Johnson in reference to her *liteness* said Insects have gay colours. I will add Insects are often *venomous*, have often *sings*. . . . I must have the patience of Job to bear the Book of *Esther*." His rival's *Anecdotes* of Johnson had "a great deal of valuable Memorabilia But there is seldom the true *zest*. She puts cherries in the brandy." Much light is thrown in the notes on the reception of Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*, and Malone's role as midwife to the great *Life* is further documented. Once Lord Monboddo cuts Boswell in the Advocates Library and this, Malone is informed, makes that eccentric peer "fair game in the *Life*". From another letter it emerges that Monboddo plied Johnson after reading the prayers and meditations which were posthumously published in 1785. "O indolible disgrace!", adds Malone encouragingly, "to be pitted by Monbod!! If you have any mercy on such a fellow, may your

right hand forget its cunning!"

Only at rare intervals does the characteristic note of the journals appear, when Boswell was feeling particularly hard done by. In June 1790 he writes to Malone,

I feel myself a poor forlorn being; with no permanent vigour of mind, no friend that can enable me to advance myself in life - A fortune sadly encumbered - children whom I can with difficulty support, and of whom I am at a loss how to dispose with advantage and propriety - Such is the general prospect. And for immediate feelings, added to *ennui* and self-upbraiding I am again unfortunate enough to have one sore of a certain nature contracted I think Monday fortnight

And yet, as he had told his friend Temple only a year before, "The delusion of Westminster Hall, of brilliant reputation and splendid fortune as a barrister, still weighs upon my imagination." Delusions are mainly confined to the journal; these letters rein in the dangerous surges of imagination. The recipients were excluded from what is now among the best publicized inner lives in human history.

Intimation of immortality

Katherine Duncan-Jones

E. A. J. HONIGMANN
John Weever: A biography of a literary associate of Shakespeare and Jonson, together with a photographic facsimile of Weever's Epigrammes (1599)
134pp. Manchester University Press. £27.50.
0 7190 2217 7

John Weever gazes at us from the portrait pre-faced to his *Funeral Monuments* (1631), used as the frontispiece to this biography, with a vulnerable, unamiable pug-dog face wedged between smoking-cap and ruff, his hand proprietarily clasping a skull. Very small, "perhaps almost a dwarf", E. A. J. Honigmann tells us, and a lifelong "tobaccoist" (smoker, not vendor, of the weed), Weever seems none the less to have engaged the affections of one Anne Onion, whose family may have borne the still more rebarbative alternative surname "Divell". As this densely researched and absorbing study shows, Weever was closely involved in the literary life of his time, writing vigorously if derivatively in many poetic genres - epigram, complaint and sonnet, as well as epigram - and appears to have been caught in the satirical cross-fire between Jonson and Marston. Perhaps it is appropriate to his slight size that he also wrote "the smallest book printed in England up to that date", a life of Christ in rhyming couplets entitled *An Agnus Dei*, 1601, which has pages a little over three centimetres deep.

It is, however, as a "literary associate of Shakespeare" that Weever has most claim on our attention. "Association" may take many forms. In estimating the nature of Weever's association with Shakespeare, much depends on whether we accept Honigmann's recently published theory (in *Shakespeare: The "lost years"*, reviewed in the *TLS* of April 19, 1985) that Shakespeare spent a year working at Houghton Tower in Lancashire: Weever certainly came from those parts, and dedicated his *Epigrammes* to a later member of the Houghton family. Undoubtedly his sonnet "Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare" marks him out as one of the earlier writers to praise Shakespeare in print. But did Weever praise Shakespeare because he had already come across him, as "Shakeshafte", in Lancashire eighteen years earlier, or because in London in 1598/9

Fortunally, the interest of this book does not depend wholly on belief in the "Lancashire connection". Honigmann's diligent researches and adventurous hypotheses are making it increasingly apparent that there is still much to discover about Shakespeare and his world.

Macmillan Education Limited wish to make it clear that the extract from D T Whiteside's

'NEWTON THE MATHEMATICIAN'

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(0579)

COMMENTARY

Interpreting the revolutionary

Emrys Jones

W. A. MOZART
Le Nozze di Figaro
Royal Opera House

"The Marriage of Figaro is not a revolutionary piece", the West German producer Johannes Schauf declared in pre-first-night interviews. "Revolutionary" he means in the political sense, of course. And it will be readily agreed that this favourite of Glyndebourne audiences and Karajan's Salzburg is unlikely to send people out to the barricades. Figaro may be justifiably aggrieved with the Count, but there's no suggestion that he wants to cut his head off. "Revolutionary" in another sense Figaro certainly is, as Schauf would no doubt agree. Unquestionably it marked an epoch, created new standards, enormously enlarged the scope of music-drama. After Figaro, nothing in opera was ever the same again. Schauf, however, was arguing that, like Beaumarchais's play which Da Ponte had so skillfully re-worked, Mozart's opera was essentially "bourgeois" in its import: "It isn't a revolutionary piece. Figaro is the parvenu *par excellence*. He doesn't want to overthrow the Count – he wants to be like him." What Schauf is saying is no doubt valid enough, but the turn he gives it seems slightly misleading. It neglects an important quality not just of the play but of the opera too – a social aggressiveness which in the circumstances is inescapably also political. True, Da Ponte softened the French Figaro's cheeky ripostes and deleted altogether his great last-act tirade against the "system". But the basic plot-contrivance in both works has a contentious and unignorable political bearing. In both works, the first act culminates in Figaro's reminder – which amounts to an announcement – to the Count that his marriage to Susanna will be the first of his vassal's marriages to be uncontaminated by the *droit de seigneur*. So, on the very day on which the action takes place the ordinary people of

Aguafrases are to be liberated from a degrading feudal practice. Far from merely wanting to be like the Count, Figaro means to extract from him a personal and political concession that the Count is altogether unwilling to make. It's true that the conflict between the two men, which is so promisingly set up in the opera's opening moments, doesn't come to very much. When Figaro learns from Susanna of the Count's sexual designs and he embarks on his defiant "Se vuol ballare", everything seems set for a grand *scène à faire* at the end in which Figaro will have the Count just where he wants him. But such a scene never materializes. Figaro soon gets displaced by Susanna and the Countess: it is they who arrange for the Count's come-uppance, and even then only the Countess is permitted to receive his final plea for pardon. The rebellious gestures may have force for a moment, but they are quickly contained; and the idea of class conflict, so strong in the first act, gives way to the working-out of erotic relationships and the expression of views not of lords and vassals, masters and servants, but of lovers and their mistresses, husbands and wives. By the end not only the Count has been humbled; Figaro, the jealous lover, is also in need of forgiveness.

In view of Schauf's insistence that Figaro doesn't want to overthrow the Count, it is surprising that Schauf's Figaro (Claudio Desderi) gives vent to more overt hatred of him than I have ever seen in performances of this opera. The extreme instance of this is Schauf's staging of "Non più andrai" at the end of the first act. Traditionally the Count goes out, leaving Figaro with Cherubino and Susanna, whereupon Figaro sings his great military aria directly to Cherubino. In Schauf's version, the Count and Basilio remain on stage, the Count sitting in the armchair while watching Figaro perform. At one point Figaro pulls off Cherubino's hat and flings it contemptuously in the direction of the Count, who silently registers offence. Figaro then moves away from Cherubino altogether and for the rest of the act stands in front of the Count, directing at him a

jet of hate while ostensibly still addressing the boy. At the end Cherubino, also offended, slaps Figaro across the face.

This startling mode of delivering the opera's most famous aria will affect different people in different ways. For myself, such "business" didn't so much illuminate Figaro's motivation – in that respect, all it does is heavily to overstate it – as leave "Non più andrai" shorn of its glory. For once the aria fails to make its usual tremendous effect – and for reasons not all obscure. The more traditional way of doing it lets us make our own interpretation; it lets us infer, if we want to, that Cherubino is an amorous young aristocrat who may well grow up into becoming another Almaviva; but it doesn't force us to do so; it leaves us free to focus on the sparkling detail of Da Ponte's words and on Mozart's exhilarating setting. Delivered in Schauf's way, it exchanges richness of implication for a narrow explicitness.

In later scenes this Figaro can hardly keep his fists off the Count. When he bursts into the Countess's bedroom he collides so violently with him that he sends him sprawling over the bed. And in the last act, he repeatedly jabs a long pin into an upholstered chair in a manner decidedly bloodthirsty. Perhaps Figaro wants to cut off the Count's head after all? But all this is Schauf's way of injecting new life into the old warhorse. His Countess is not the usual serenely melancholy aristocrat, Olympianly gracious and ever-tactful. Here, on her first appearance she's a frowzy neglected wife in dowdy nightwear who stays in bed all day because she's too depressed to get up. And she's already on the bottle: when left alone she tipsles doggedly and looks well on the way to becoming Congreve's Lady Wishfort. The trouble with such "realism" is that it betrays Mozart's music (eg. "Porgi amor"), which does not at all suggest a socially gauche and insecure and inelegant person. In any case Karita Mattila, who plays the Countess, shows few signs of coping adequately with Schauf's conception; her contribution throughout is a sadly tentative one. Stella Kleindienst, on the other hand,

begins strongly as a tall, slim Cherubino but seems unable to sustain the necessary boyishness: when disguised as a woman she, or he, simply becomes a woman. But she too has been through Schauf's discipline of intensive character-study: she sings the first part of "Voi che sapete" not to the Countess but distractedly to Susanna, whereupon the Countess shows impatience: when she has finished, however, the Countess sits transfixed, unable to look away. At such moments as this, Schauf's repeated point about the disruptive ungovernability of the feelings perhaps justifies itself: one is surprised into seeing a familiar character from a slightly new angle.

Figaro too is conceived rather as a fluidly unpredictable person than as a type: embodied by Desderi, he is less amusing than usual, more a person of weight, even of some dangerousness; and when in the last act he is confronted by Susanna's seeming faithlessness, he puts on heroic stature and becomes an Othello in the making. The Count (Thomas Allen) and Susanna (Marie McLaughlin) are intelligently taken along more traditional lines. Both singers are in fine voice – in fact the Count's third-act aria and Susanna's "Deh vieni" make the outstanding moments of the evening. Both singers profit from the fact that they are allowed to sing their arias comparatively free of obtrusive "interpretation".

All the smaller parts, with one exception, are realized with fresh and delicate detail. The exception is Bartolo, who makes an odd negative impression. Robert Tear's Basilio's finished portrait of a scruffy and prurient cleric, ill-shaven, balding, with lank hairs hanging down his neck. Sarah Walker's Marcelina effortlessly exudes a tearful maternal warmth and is not too overbearing even in her first clash with Susanna. And, given her last-act air for once, she makes a fuller impression than usual. Enveloping everything is Benoit Haitink's beautifully judged orchestral sous never calling attention to itself, giving firm but supple support, and when necessary contributing urgency and passion.

like *The Hypochondriac*, which explicitly require farcical elements – enemies and their consequences, angry chases round beds, mock ceremonies and the rest – for the pulse of farce makes other things seem slow and heavy. And here there are plenty of other things: arguments about medicine, intrigues and plans, concealments and betrayals. Nancy Meckler's modern-dress version at the Lyric does the farce well, sometimes superlatively. The scene in which Philip Bird as Cléante/Clarence performs his impromptu love-opera in front of the assembled others, including his doctor-rival, is a delight. Mary Maddox, as the irrepressible Toinette, is quick and deft. Above all, Tom Courtenay is magnificent as Argan: baby, bully, eager, splenetic, sentimental, impossible. But when the pace slows down, the production is much less convincing. This is more of a pity in that Brian Glover's Béralde/Harold, for exam-

whole things goes by at a brisk pace. But what are we seeing? The re-presentation of stock figures from the farces? The satirizing of excess or prejudice? A play of ideas with amusing extras, or a romp with serious bits? Why can't he make up his mind?

Here, as elsewhere, it is Molière who is consistent. His plays are about things on which he, his contemporaries and we ourselves have continual swings of feeling: health, love, credulity, jealousy, belief, self-regard. They re-enact the countless shiftings of our views, from easy laughter to queasy silence, by turning inside out the conventions: force where the words matter, verbal comedy from which the physical never disappears, and so on. Toinette speaks more carefully than Argan; Angélique's language is more stiff and stylized than that of her elders.

By far the hardest plays to stage are those,

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 352
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than November 13. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.
Entries marked "Author, Author 352" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on November 20.

- The morning of our rest has come.
The sun is shining clear;
I see it on the sleepy tops
Put on your shawl my dear,
And let us leave the smoky town,
The dense and stagnant lane
And take our children by the hand
To see the fields again.
- The thousand streets of London grey
Repel all country sights:

But bar not winds upon their way,
Nor quench the scent of new-mown hay
In depth of summer nights.

- I dreamed I saw a little brook
Run rippling down the Strand;
With cherry-trees and apple-trees
Abloom on either hand:
The sparrows gathered from the squares,
Upon the branches green;
The pigeons flocked from Palace-Yard,
Afters their wings to preen.

Competition No 348
Winner: Victor Davies
Answers:

- Ere magic poets felt the goul,
Ere Darwin whimpered the Church in doubt,
Ere Apollonia had found out
The round world must be right;
When Gladstone, bluest of the blue,
Read all Augustine's folios through;
When France was tame, and no one knew
We and the Chair would fight,
William Cory, "Hermit", *Tonite*.

- Let it be admitted at once, mournful as the admission is, that every instinct in his intelligence went out at first to greet the new light. It had hardly done so, when a recollection of the opening chapter of "Genesis" checked it at the outset. He consulted with Carpenter, a great investigator, but one who was fully as incapable as himself of remodelling his ideas with regard to the old, accepted hypotheses. They both determined, on various grounds, to do nothing to do with the terrible theory, but to hold steadily to the law of the fixity of species.
Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*, chapter 5.

- He had taken a great deal of pains with his sermon, which was on the subject of geology – then coming to the fore as a theological bugbear. He showed that as far as geology was worth anything at all – and he was too liberal entirely to poo-poo it – it confirmed the absolutely historical character of the Mosaic account of the Creation he given in Genesis. Any phenomena which at first sight appeared to make against this view were only partial phenomena and broke down upon investigation.
Samuel Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*, chapter 10.

A conversion to charity

Roy Porter

DAVID EDGAR
Entertaining Strangers
Cottesloe Theatre

Entrangement and reconciliation lie at the heart of David Edgar's morality play, which draws upon the traditions of mumming to present the eternal struggles of good and evil, the flesh and the spirit, in a Dorsetshire recognizably just before Hardy. When the Revd Henry Moule enters upon his ministry he brings with him an evangelical zeal, all faith and no charity, which divides and alienates his heathen flock. A latter-day St George, he crusades against sin and sex, against the demon drink, but above all against Mrs Eldridge's Green Dragon alehouse where the mummers practice.

Moule (= mussel = muscular Christianity) may be a bigoted villain, but the worldlings are no heroes. "I sell rope", the hard-bitten publican tells him: each must look after his own, and it's devil take the hindmost. Seen through

David Nokes

The Elephant Plays
Radio 4

A shilly-looking raja lounges across a sofa in an oak-panelled room. From his waist curves the blade of a scimitar. At his feet a candle throws his shadow against the wall in the shape of a huge elephant. This drawing, by Peter Brookes, was supposedly the inspiration for Radio 4's series of "Elephant Plays". In this radio version of a creative writing exercise, three dramatists were asked to take the drawing as a starting-point for a play. The results varied widely in both quality and style. Marcia Kahan treated the whole thing as a joke. *The Transfiguration of Herbert Mellish*, in which a failed business man is transformed into a successful performing elephant, was a version of metamorphosis owing more to Woody Allen than to Kafka. Written in a style of deliberate pastiche, it ran through a catalogue of clichés of New York Jewish humour. "Horrific, shamonic, Death-shmeth", moans Sylvia, the

The argument from design

Alan Jenkins

The Belly of an Architect
Various cinemas

In our first glimpse of Stourley Kracklite, American architect and possessor of the belly in question, he is strenuously exploring the horizontal plane, with his wife, in a sleeping car. Their train, *en route*, it transpires, for Rome, passes a cemetery, and the camera lingers a while on its baroque confusions. Pillow-talk is unpromising: "What a way to enter Italy", sighs a grateful Louisa (Chloe Webb); a little embarrassed chat about pasta, wines and architecture follows, and a reference to Kracklite's Chicago origins – "City of blood and meat", his wife points out, with playful pats at his impressive bulk: Some may think the signposts point not to Rome but a nearly unmodulated Hollywood.

Kracklite is a big man, but not a big intellect; he has come to Rome to honour his obsession with the vision (largely unrealized) of Etienne-Louis Boullée, and arrange an exhibition of the eighteenth-century French architect's work. His hosts, a sophisticated family of architectural-artistic Romans, welcome him with a dinner, a cake in the form of Boullée's design for a memorial to Newton (its dome and concentric pillars hinting at a grandiose and unimaginable of Roman precedents, never stated by Boullée) and a lot of absurd, deaunified, stylized speeches that hint darkly at a

Christian, capitalist or pagan eyes, it is a harsh world.

And it is made all the crueler when cholera strikes. The corrupt corporation does nothing for the victims. Moule sees the visitation as the wrath of God and saves his parish, aided by the three angels of the Apocalypse who descend with a huge cauldron for boiling infected clothes clean. The hated vicar becomes a hero at last; but in doing so he undergoes a deeper conversion, convinced that cholera is God's judgment not against the vicious poor but against the vicious rich, the corrupt and uncaring property-owners who allow filth to fester.

When his son seduces the pub's serving wench, and then kills himself out of remorse, Moule's own cup of sorrow runs over; but from sorrow comes understanding: there are aliens within his own family, indeed in his own breast. The ultimate evils are not the sins of the flesh, but estrangement, shutting one's door, one's heart: true charity is entertaining strangers. Those three angels? They turn out to have been the publican's daughters, bearing a hewery vat on a dray.

Edgar's tale triumphs because it captures the cliché simplicities of the old morality and the

elephant's "widow" to her analyst, in a whining South Bronx accent. "So explain already", she snaps at the circus-owner who reveals the elephant-man's plight. "Decisions, decisions" trumpets Herbie, her transmogrified spouse in his new role as circus sage.

A Slight Case of Graulude by John Graham also relied heavily on pastiche. The only one of the trio to use an Indian setting, it hovered uneasily between the styles of oriental tale and ripping yarn. Much of the comedy smacked of undergraduate revue. Two passengers on an outbound ship are discussing matrimony while gazing at the view. "Magnificent, really splendid. A granite bastion. So monumentally British", comments one. "Your fiancée?" enquires the other. "No, Gibraltar." Kahan's thirty-minute piece was brisk enough to work as a surreal sketch, but the most elephantine element in Graham's hour-long play was its lumbering predictable humour.

Andrew Rissik's *King Priam* was the only attempt at serious drama. Yet here any connection with the "elephant" theme was at best strained, if not actually a liability. Priam's sudden recollection of a dream about an Indian elephant sounded suspiciously like a desperate

emotional power of melodrama, while weaving them into a more ambitious tapestry: precisely who, in the end, is good or evil? Mercifully we are spared the mere folksiness or political rant of so much people's theatre. The adapter of *Nicholas Nickleby* shows his wonted flair for filling the stage with contrasting tableaux, now festive, now sinister. The cast rises to the occasion. Judi Dench blends Mother Courage and St Joan as the publican while Tim Pigott-Smith's preacher conveys all the callowness of conviction; and they are supported by an ensemble whose dazzling playing is a *tour de force*.

Above all, Peter Hall's production is a revelation. The Cottesloe auditorium becomes earth and heaven and hell. At one end, the vicarage; at the other, the alehouse; in between the promenading audience, the actors, the action. The company indeed entertains its strangers, reaching out with the embraces of music and dance, words and emotions. Edgar's story of cholera and compassion is a moving parable for our AIDS-ridden, victim-blaming days: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

ploy to bring a pre-existing play within the prescribed rubric. As a re-working of the story of Troy the play strove for a tone of elegiac dignity, though sometimes lapsing into a kind of sub-Shakespearean rhetoric. Constructed as a series of meditative monologues, it presented each character in isolation. Priam, played by Paul Scofield, was an ageing Prospero, desiring no more dreams, no more hopes. Paris (Michael Kitchen) was the dreamer: "my dream was to walk on air". Hector (Ronald Pickup) was haunted by thoughts of death. Menelaus (George Baker) the kindly cuckold, still wept for the loss of his wife: "All I could offer her was kindness." The distinguished cast, which also included Michael Pennington as Achilles and Janet McTeer as Helen, gave a powerful resonance to the play's sensuous language. Music by David Chilton and Nick Russell-Pavler created an ominous atmosphere of the chilly hours before dawn. Yet still the play failed to reach the heights of inspiration to which it evidently aspired. Though a reluctant recruit to the elephant troupe, *King Priam* still had the feel of an exercise, adding little, in imagination or comment, to its Homeric source.

himself with enlarged photographic images of noble Roman bellies, finally losing control of the project.

His desperate fight for a grip on all this, first by attempting to impose a draughtsman's design on his troubling symptoms, then by shows of flaring violence, is one of the few of this film's many intriguing threads to engage with believable behaviour, recognizably human emotion. The same cannot be said of the central drama of disintegration. The belly of the architect and that of the architect's wife, the one sick unto death, "eating him away" with its cancer, the other reputedly (though invisibly) swelling with new life, wage their over-symbolic battle, but the personal dimension is lost in a welter of lame dialogue and interesting leitmotifs. However did these two come to marry, whatever is between them? – is a legitimate response, as the one slides into obviously irreversible decline and the other slips laughingly into an affair with the caricaturedly awful Caspasian (he despises both Kracklite and Boullée, and is siphoning off exhibition funds while preening himself over his conquest). "Don't leave me", says Stourley; "It's too late", replies Louisa; it is too late, to recuperate anything explicable or affecting from those statements. In one sequence Kracklite holds our sympathy, as he stumbles on a collection of photographs – taken by Caspasian's even more awful sister, who has designs of her own on the big man's body – depicting his collapse and the stages of his wife's defection. His later, more public humiliation is



"Angel with Censer", a cartoon by Karl Parsons (1884-1934), from an exhibition of Parsons's work at the William Morris Gallery, London E17, until March 12, 1988.

unconvincingly framed by two outraged diners. Throughout, Brian Dennehy as Kracklite, reeling from each new stab in the back or stomach, lurching towards vulnerability, gives the kind of performance often called "towering". Chloe Webb, a versatile and inventive actress, has nothing to go to work on. Slivers of reference, morsels of association and great slabs of symbolism are toyed with. Themes potentially rich in implication – is Kracklite's cancer, the loss of his centre of gravity a "punishment" for his boastful carnality and gluttony, for being naive about Italy, for attending more to the visionary gleams of the past than the realities of the present? Could Boullée's extravagant inventions be said to pre-figure the different extravaganzas of Fascist Rome? Does time mock human aspirations, or only their imperfect embodiments? Can the continuity of lives, if not of the individual life, and the nastiness or indifference of the world at large, reconcile us to mortality and death? – these flash before us and are swallowed back by others briefly more consuming, without cohering to lend the slightest resonance, depth or warmth to the action, or are subsumed in the remorselessly self-conscious director's pre-occupation with ways of looking. Equally rich in potential, and intermittently more rewarding, because simply enjoyable as a stunning series of Roman *vedute*, is this ambitious film's visual meditation on architecture, or rather, on buildings, no less artfully lit or immaculately photographed than anything else on show.

Sticking to the system

Paul Griffiths

MILTON BABBITT
Words About Music
Edited by Stephen Dembski and Joseph N. Straus
205pp. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. £21.40.
0299 107906
ANDREA OLMSTEAD
Conversations with Roger Sessions
274pp. Boston: Northeastern University Press. £18.95.
1555510109

Composers normally lament that their music is insufficiently played, or insufficiently well played; Milton Babbitt's complaint is that his discipline is not properly respected by his university colleagues. He has no Schoenbergian illusions about being regarded as a latter-day Tchaikovsky, nor seemingly any doubts that the nature of music has fundamentally been changed by the twelve-note principle that Schoenberg brought to birth. Everything stems from this. In the total era, there was general agreement about harmonic functions, and so the possibility of learning rules that applied to all compositions. But, in Babbitt's view, all the significance of a twelve-note composition is conveyed through relationships unique to that composition, through relationships that have their embedding in the twelve-note set. Studying and listening to his Second Quartet, for instance, will not be of much use when one turns to his Third, because the meaning of any passage in a twelve-note piece is determined by its context and not by any abiding conventions: there has been a shift from "communality" to "contextuality". So it is quite unreasonable to

expect twelve-note works to make their way in what Babbitt dismisses as "the unreal world", just as it would be unreasonable to suppose that works of professional mathematics or philosophy could hit the bestseller lists.

The coherence of Babbitt's position is unarguable; so also is its fruitfulness in providing him with the intellectual equipment to achieve a body of works now so large that the works' contextuality would seem under threat, and to present his ideas in prose that reads like a translation out of symbolic logic. There are a few passages in *Words About Music* that have the unmistakable rattle of his typewriter ("Let me begin by apologetically confessing that I do not and I cannot regard the subject of the survival of serious music as one of those subjects so genteel that it can be reserved just for academic or semi-academic occasions by providing a subject so lacking in urgency and pertinence that it can be quietly and safely interred once the occasion has run its course") but in general this set of lectures, given at the University of Wisconsin in 1983, shows a free-wheeling, avuncular style that may surprise. This is, as nearly as we may hope to see, Babbitt with his hair down: a relatively improvisatory performance well transcribed by the editors (despite a mispunctuation in the last sentence).

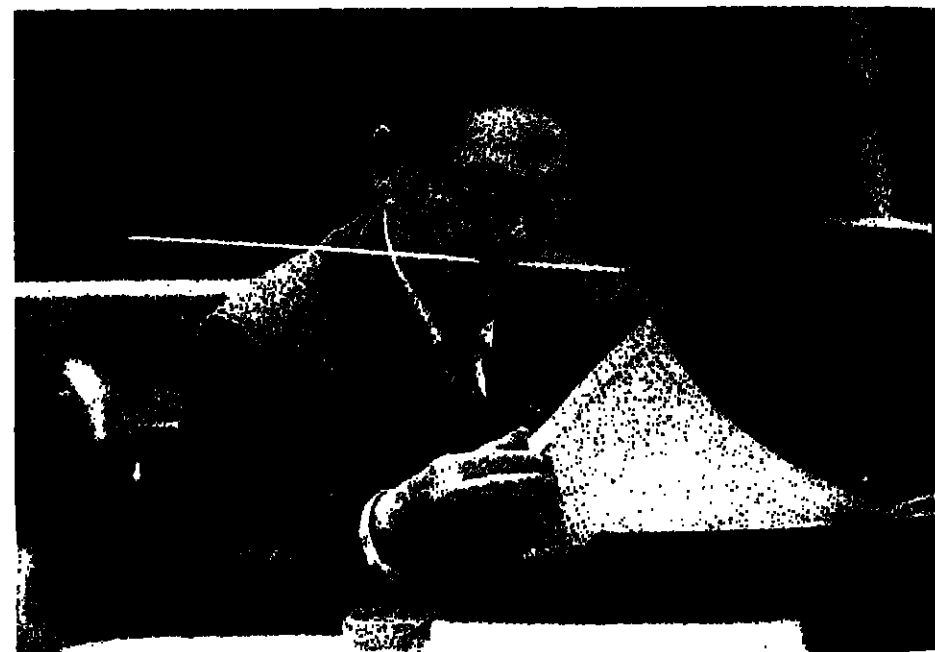
But the Princeton magus keeps on the armour of his assumptions. Going through a couple of Bach chorale harmonizations, some of his own practices and favourite works of Schoenberg (the Fourth Quartet, the Op 33a piano piece), his concern is always with how compositional decisions can be shown to have been necessitated by their musical contexts. His implicit rejection here of any dualism between "creative freedom" and "the constraints of the system" is persuasive, and his argument hardly seems inhumane when it is conducted

with such passion and wit, and when it depends on and also leads to so profound an acquaintance with the music. In one of his biographical asides he recalls how, in New York in the 1930s, Schoenberg's music was only available in a library, where you read the scores and "crushed your little minds trying to hear them". Perhaps the current easy access to the most difficult music, with even a fair amount of Babbitt to be had on compact disc, is another symptom of "the unlikely survival of serious music", to which the last lecture is devoted.

However, Babbitt's view of music as superior puzzle-solving with notes and intervals can be alarmingly reductive, especially where it is applied to the oratorio *Die Jakobsleiter*, which Schoenberg began in 1917 and unsuccessfully attempted to complete in the 1940s. "The reason he couldn't continue", Babbitt concludes, "is thus a fundamentally, profoundly technical one having to do with the structure of the hexachords", which he has just shown to lack the characteristic of inversional combinatoriality that Schoenberg often used. Quite what "reason" means here is hard to determine. It cannot be the reason that presented

itself to Schoenberg's own mind, because Babbitt elsewhere describes how Schoenberg never formulated an understanding of hexachordal structure. And what of *Moses and Aron*, which he similarly failed to finish, but which has hexachords of irreproachable quality? Perhaps, after all, the notion of contextuality needs to be enlarged, so that the necessities acting on a work can include things like old age, poor health, the foreignness a composer might find in a piece thirty years old, and God.

Babbitt's teacher Roger Sessions was, in his scores and in his own words about music, much more willing to operate within a broad range of reference, and his conversations with Andrea Olmstead are correspondingly allusive, if a generalized and relaxed to a fault. This is a gentle retrospect over a lifetime's work, conducted when the composer was in his late seventies and early eighties; and though one may feel the boiling down of interviews recorded weekly over a period of six years to have produced a rather thin consommé, there is happily some internal evidence that Sessions and his young memorialist enjoyed their prolonged microphonic flirtation.



Darius Milhaud: an illustration from *Musicians in Camera*, with photographs by Laelia Goehr and text by John Ains (192pp. Bloomsbury. £14.95. 07473 0042 8).

In the pay of the King

Curtis Price

ANDREW ASHBE
Records of English Court Music
Volume Two: 1685-1714
246pp. Ashbee, 214 Mall Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5EQ. £11.
0930720739

For the well-dressed but underpaid English court musician, the Glorious Revolution and its aftermath brought minor disruption to routine but also badly needed extra work. James II's papist chapel required a large contingent of Italian musicians, but political discretion assured even-handed support of the Anglican Chapel Royal and Private Musick, the reorganization of which exposed the full extent of salary arrears left by Charles II, an enormous debt that his brother tried honourably to clear. The Irish Expedition of 1690-91 and, later, Marlborough's foreign campaigns were bonanzas for trumpeters and kettledrums, while less bellicose obolists and bassoonists profited by the Peace of Ryswick and Blenheim. Yet in spite of the remarkable stability of court institutions during these turbulent times, the Royal Musick slipped gradually from a peak of cosmopolitan excellence under Charles II into the conservative trough of second-rate local talent inherited by George I. The best musicians, foreign and domestic, found a more lucrative, less oppressive existence in the concert room, opera-house and duet palace.

Charting this decline, the second instalment of Andrew Ashbee's calendar of payments to court musicians moves beyond the chronological limit of Lafontaine's *The King's Musick 1490-1700*, the work it supplements and aims to replace, to the end of the reign of Queen Anne. The post-1700 Public Record

Office documents, most published here for the first time, will interest military historians more than musicologists. The war machines of William III and the Duke of Marlborough demanded large amounts of loud music, including a school "for breeding and instructing of boys" in the many art of trumpet playing. In the best military tradition, the records of such expenditure are copious and boring. Yet Ashbee also found useful information on other aspects of court musical life. For instance, new details are provided of the career of the organ builder Bernard Smith, whose conspicuous success at Hampton Court, Whitehall and St George's Chapel, Windsor, was not, however, matched by the music composed for his instruments. Some light is also shed on the small mystery of why the great Purcell was threatened with the sack for selling places in the Westminster Abbey organ-loft at the coronation of William and Mary: it seems the Lord Chamberlain had assigned these vantage-points more or less permanently to various fashionable persons, even permitting them to put a "lock on ye doore of the seats".

As in the first volume, covering the years 1660-85 (reviewed in the *TLS* of April 24), Ashbee separates Treasury, Great Wardrobe, Jewel House and Exchequer records from those of the Lord Chamberlain's office, which form the bulk of the main calendar. In the case of Exchequer data, which are concerned chiefly with back-pay from the reign of Charles II, the separation is justified, but the volume would have been easier to use without further division, especially since the main calendar becomes rather thin for the reign of Queen Anne. There is a welcome subject index covering both volumes. Though a sub-editor might have caught the duplication of one entry with different spelling and orthography (pp 22 and 182), the general accuracy of the text is a good advertisement for self-publication.

Colourful case-histories

Hugh Brigstocke

FRANCIS HASKELL
Past and Present in Art and Taste: Selected Essays
272pp. Yale University Press. £20.
030102007 8

For nearly a hundred years, from the time of Cowe and Cavalcaselle and Morelli until the second half of the present century, the principal effort of art historians in Europe and America was directed towards object-oriented research; the preoccupation with connoisseurship and provenance which led to the phenomenon of the *catalogue raisonné* of an individual artist's work. Francis Haskell was one of the first scholars in the English-speaking world to broaden the art historian's sense of the past. His *Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque*, published in 1963, was followed in 1976 by *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France*. In each of these groundbreaking surveys, Haskell resisted the temptation to theorize too freely about the effect of social conditions on artistic taste. He chose instead to move cautiously towards a more complex analysis, rich in paradox, based on the intimate study of well-chosen individual case histories, with a selection of colourful patrons, collectors and critics.

Past and Present in Art and Taste, a collection of essays all previously published separately in specialist journals, displays the same methodology. Here too the strong underlying theme is the relativity of artistic taste and the loss of critical innocence by both artists and those who collect or write about their work. Art historians are exposed as particularly susceptible to critical prejudice, both in their own writing and in their response to the ideas of others. Haskell provides a good example of this in his discussion of Seroux d'Agincourt's *Handbook par les monuments, depuis sa décadence au XVIIIe siècle jusqu'à sa renaissance au XIXe*, a pioneering work which documented for the first time the art of late antiquity and the Middle Ages through an immense corpus of reproductive engravings. He convincingly shows that it was inspired not by admiration for the art of a then unfashionable period, as hitherto supposed, but by study of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and a preoccupation with "the process by which perfection disappeared". When the Frenchman's book appeared in 1810, after twenty-one years of publication delays, it was taken up by a younger generation of critics with quite different tastes and artistic values. Where d'Agincourt

had picked his way with gingerly determination through centuries of decay, here and there holding up for cautious admiration the occasional Byzantine or Lombard church or medieval fresco, his disciples, who belonged to a civilization very different from that in which he had been brought up, began to reject his evolutionary approach to art and to adopt "primitive" artefacts for their own sake.

Haskell also examines the influence of another eighteenth-century Frenchman, Simon d'Hancarville, who came to art history from the world of philosophical speculation. Enamoured by William Hamilton, British envoy in Naples, with the task of designing and writing an illustrated catalogue of his ancient vases (published in 1766), d'Hancarville raised fundamental questions about why art should exist at all and why it took different forms at different times. "Anticipating much Romantic theory," he said that the origin of the arts must be sought in popular religion, which he saw as a combination of sexual energy, and art was thus created as a tribute to fertility and creativity. The idea was later taken up by his friend and mentor Richard Payne Knight in the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* (1786).

Of course, d'Hancarville's eventual influence, like that of d'Agincourt, was conditioned by historical circumstances. As Haskell concludes, the love of the Encyclopaedists for the systematic search for a common origin, a single explanation, to account for all the varieties of artistic phenomena, with what we would think of as a typical eighteenth-century preoccupation with the exotic, the irrational, the hidden springs of religion and creativity,

His influence could survive only as long as those preoccupations were combined, as they were at the very end of the eighteenth century. The empirical, positivist art history of later years might seem to have disposed of him.

The relativity of art-historical and critical perceptions is further revealed in a case history devoted to a particular work of art, Perugino's "Apollo and Marsyas", now in the Louvre, and the partisan opinions of its eccentric English owner, Morris Moore, nicknamed Taste by his friends, bought the picture as a speculation at Christie's in March, 1850, and spent the rest of his life trying to persuade the sceptical art-historical establishment that he had unearthed an early work by Raphael. Almost every available expert in Europe became involved and between them they came up with attributions to Timoteo Viti, Francia, Mantegna, Costa, Marco Melloni and last of all Perugino. The reluctance to attribute the work to Perugino was based not on conflicting stylistic or morphological evidence but on purely psychological considerations. As Haskell explains:

The magic of the picture was held to reside in its youthfulness: it corresponded exactly to the mid-nineteenth century view of "the spring time of the Renaissance"; but the antique inspiration of the figure of Apollo seemed to make a date of before 1504 wholly unacceptable. Had Perugino been the author, he would then have been a very old man - and no one could believe that the picture had been painted by anyone other than a youth.

The bitterness of the controversy surrounding the picture was resolved only in 1883 by a pragmatic curator at the Louvre who himself had doubts about the attribution to Raphael. Realizing that Moore would probably sell the picture to the first museum to accept it as a Raphael, François-Anatole Gruyer advised his superiors at the museum to acquire it on Moore's terms. It was the work of art itself, not its attribution, or the scholarly reputations of those involved in the transaction, that would count for most in the end - "L'oeuvre seule reste, et c'est là l'essentiel".

Haskell's book is more concerned, however, with great art that has been neglected than with art that has been overburdened with critical attention. As he informs us in his general introduction, he had at one time intended to write an entire book on a remarkable phenomenon that had never occurred before the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in France:

that is the hostility met with, at the beginning of their careers and sometimes for much longer, by almost all those painters whom we today consider to have been the true creative innovators of their period and the huge success enjoyed by those Salon painters whose art seemed to be based on outworn formulas.

Several essays investigate issues associated with this theme. In his discussion of Giovanni Battista Sommariva, a nouveau-riche barber's apprentice-turned-lawyer from Milan who settled in Paris at the beginning of the nineteenth century and built up a vast collection of neo-classical painting and sculpture for his villa on Lake Como, Haskell suggests we should suspend the cliché that the shift in the social status of art patrons in the wake of the French Revolution was in large measure responsible for the downfall of classical art and the rise to prominence of genre, landscape, anecdotal history and portraiture. For "not one of these branches of painting was encouraged by Sommariva".

In a more general essay, "Art and the Language of Politics", Haskell explores the association, often unconscious, of artistic with political change.

Nineteenth-Century Theories of Art (563pp. University of California Press. \$38.50. 0 520 04887 3), edited by Joshua C. Taylor, is a collection of writings by late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century artists and critics. Taylor divides the book into six thematic sections. In "Beauty and the Language of Form", he includes Sir Joshua Reynolds's discourse on art delivered at the Royal Academy in 1771, and William Gilpin on the picturesque; the section "Art and the Community of Souls" contains pieces by William Blake, Adolphe Thiers and Charles Baudelaire. Other sections include "Truth to Nature and the Nature of Truth", "Art and Society" and "Art as Creation". Taylor places writing by well-known painters next to those by virtually unknown critics; and the pieces range from philosophical essays to casual jottings and observations.

After the politicization of life and language that came in with the French Revolution, terms such as "avant-garde" and "reactionary" become available to the writer on art and quickly coloured his and our way of looking. However, the results of this equation of art with politics were often highly confusing. We find Corot being criticized by a disillusioned opposition journalist for not extending the revolutionary quality in his art to his political life; the unfortunate Impressionists are disparagingly labelled Communards, and the Cubists described as anti-national. Yet in reality left-wing political views were far more closely allied with conservative artistic taste and an admiration for high-finished neo-classical painting.

In "Enemies of Modern Art" Haskell draws attention to two important consequences of the failure of informed critics to appreciate Romanticism and Realism until the last quarter of the nineteenth century:

Critical innocence has now been lost. . . . Much hatred survives and will continue to do so for fifty years and more, but it has lost intellectual energy or even moral justification. The acknowledgement that there had been a war, but that the critics had (so to speak) lost it and that it was in any case now over, is perhaps the single most important prelude to the development of what we now think of as modern art.

Second, it led to the self-conscious use of the term "avant-garde" to suggest "an art that, by definition, would not run the risk of being contaminated by too early a welcome". It is reflected in attempts "made by artists in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first years of this one to recreate - in less painful, more productive forms - those circumstances that had arisen more spontaneously at an earlier date: that is, an instinctive hostility toward contemporary art . . . which - so it came to be believed - was the necessary breeding ground for true art".

Haskell understandably does not attempt to give a full historical account of the opposition to artistic innovation in France during the

nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it is disappointing to find that we are told virtually nothing about the conditions under which artists produced, exhibited and sold their work, or about the role of the art market in disseminating it. The relatively independent status of the artist during this period and the subsequent change in the function of the works he might produce for exhibition are topics which would certainly repay further study. Alternatively, given Haskell's belief that the history of taste and collecting is best studied through case histories of individuals with flair, one might reasonably have hoped for detailed discussion of leading art dealers from Jean Baptiste Pierre Le Brun to Durand Ruel.

Instead, Haskell has given us a book which, although tantalizingly fragmentary as a history of taste, is also far more deep and original. Its essence is the search for the relationship between the practice of the living painter, the collection and study of old masters, and the value judgments of critics and art historians. By alerting us to the pitfalls inherent in art historical enquiry and the language of art criticism and dusting off the cobwebs that often obscure our perception of celebrated old masters, such as Giorgione's "Concert champêtre", Haskell brings us much nearer to the singular unvarnished work of art and the mental set of the artist at the moment of its creation than most object-orientated connoisseurs who play games of snap with their photographs. He also helps us to sympathize with the predicament faced by all modern and original artists, such as Gauguin - who complained in 1900 of "the curious and mad public which demands of the painter the greatest possible originality and yet only accepts him when he calls to mind other painters". Those who are inclined to belittle the study of patronage, collecting and taste as a reduction of the work of art to the level of a fashionable commodity, would do well to ponder on some of the profound insights on the creation, perception and criticism of art elegantly contained within this volume.

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Disestablishment in decline

Edward Norman

G. I. T. MACHIN
Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1869
to 1921
374pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.
0198201060

The legislation which severed the connection of Church and State in Ireland was passed in 1869; by 1921 the final consequential details of the disestablishment in Wales were completed. These were the decades when the powerful national agencies of Protestant Dissent, and many both in political life and in the leadership of the Church of England, expected a further advance to disestablishment all around: that the links of Church and State would next be broken in Scotland and in England, and that the grand programme of nineteenth-century European liberalism, with its American exemplar – "a free church in a free State" – would receive embodiment within the British Constitution itself. As it happened the political ingredients changed, and the influence of religion in public life declined. The moment passed, and the establishments of Presbyterianism in Scotland and Anglicanism in England survive to this day. G. I. T. Machin's new book, a successor to his valuable *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1832 to 1868*, published ten years ago, examines the religious issues which entered the political discourse of these closing decades of the nineteenth century, and suggests reasons for the failure of the Nonconformists' expectations. This, too, is an extremely valuable work: a detailed, balanced, reliable account of each of the successive crises in the Church establishments and of the nature and intensity of the political influences which sought their overthrow. Those who would understand the mind of the Church should still resort to the two volumes of Owen Chadwick's by now classic study, *The Victorian Church* (second edition, 1970 and 1972), but those who

seek an account of the nuts-and-bolts of the religious dimension of the political process in Victorian Britain can consult Dr Machin with great profit. His range and sympathies are broad, his observations precise and accurate: the second volume is, as was the first, a book both for the scholar and for those who need a source of occasional reference.

The wider political implications of a disconnection of religion and government are quite reasonably regarded by Machin as outside his terms of reference. In this he follows the principals whose actions and ideas he is recording and interpreting. Unlike the attempts at the creation of "a free Church in a free State" made in other European countries during the nineteenth century, which were highly ideological and often the work of men hostile to organized Christianity, the movements in Britain were inspired by Christians themselves. Despite the declamations of the Manchester Radicals about the corrupt apparatus of the "aristocratic" state structure, the fact was that the State in Britain did reform itself – and the Radicals, for all their rhetoric, were in the end rather careful and rather selective about the institutions they wanted to overthrow. The Church Establishment was to go not because it was any longer perceived as an arm of the oppressing landed classes (not, at any rate, by the second half of the nineteenth century) but because the programme of "religious equality" required the removal of a "hedge" – to use the word used at the time of the Irish disestablishment – of religious inequality. It all came down to matters like Church rates, denominational education, burials in Anglican churchyards, and the governing bodies of Oxford and Cambridge colleges: galling grievances, but not fundamental issues of political association.

And that raises the other peculiar feature of the British movement for the separation of Church and State: its non-ideological basis. Matters were introduced in Parliament individually and on grounds of expediency. The Dissenting pressure groups, again, roared

away about the high principles involved, but they never, in reality, seriously addressed themselves to the great principle actually at issue: what was to be the moral basis of the legislative process, and the foundation of social order, if Christianity was not to be. In practice they merely assumed, on what they took to be the American model, that Christian laws would continue to issue from a legislature purged of partiality in its relations with the various denominations. Machin examines their pragmatism and charts the course by which politicians, forever in England seeking to avoid rocking the boat by allowing discussions of political theory to obtrude upon the matter of government, responded. By the end of the century most of the appurtenances of the old confessional State either had been removed altogether or were reset, within the panoply of the wider establishment, in such a way, and with such reduced influence, as to make them acceptable ornaments rather than effective agencies of awesome and ultimate truths.

Only one of Machin's conclusions raises some queries. He attributes some of the diminishing importance of religious issues in government to the widened electorate. Working-class voters, he contends, were preoccupied with "the aims of the working class", and so "social change through state intervention" became the priority of politics, rather than legislation to prevent the High Church clergy wearing fancy dress at their altars. Now it is by no means clear that most working-class voters had any such priority; indeed the unpopularity of State intervention with the wider electorate, at least until some way into the twentieth century, was to be a major problem for the middle-class collectivist socialists who were promoting it. And the truth anyway is that state intervention, and parliamentary involvement with social issues, owed very little either to the rise of

popular political parties or to working-class voters. It derived from expert opinion, the fascination of the liberal intelligentsia with social statistics, Christian pastoral sense, developments in engineering and medical science, and, above all, the belief that it was the duty of government to lead opinion and not to follow it. Slum clearance was not unpopular only with the slum landlords; it was opposed, too, by those who lost cheap lodgings and whose sense that a link existed between disease and insanitary dwellings was rudimentary.

Dr Machin also dwells upon the increasing extent to which the electorate consisted of non-churchgoers, and this, certainly, was a more decisive influence in reducing the volume of religious issues brought before the legislature. But the main consideration was really gradual withdrawal of the intelligentsia and their penumbra of followers within the political circles. The Victorian boom in religion may be defined largely by their interests. For a time, they took up Christianity as the vehicle of their moral seriousness. They built large new churches for the industrial masses – which remained under-used. They promoted religious education – and then started having the doubts which in the end began to cause all education to become secularized. When they gave up orthodox Christianity, all the aspirants to enlightenment beneath them – the poor devils who aped their intellectual niceties and supposed, in consequence, that they were thinking for themselves – were left beached. A couple of decades later they began to reflect the new scepticism, though in a manner still redolent of a kind of latter-day Christian moralism. The result was a decline, noticeable as early as the 1880s, in Church membership. For a few years in the 1950s sections of the educated classes looked again briefly at the Churches and then looked away. The decline resumed.

The secularizing process

Bryan Wilson

MICHAEL P. HORNSBY-SMITH
Roman Catholics in England: Studies in social structure since the Second World War
253pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.
0521503133

Michael P. Hornsby-Smith's study *Roman Catholics in England* is based on national and local survey research and interviews with members of Catholic élites. Together these sources produce the most comprehensive sociological depiction, not only of Catholics in contemporary England, but of any Roman Catholic population anywhere in the world – indeed, of the members of any denomination. There is nothing comparable to it even for the United States, where, in general, survey research is much more advanced.

Catholics in England are a far from homogeneous population. Irish immigrants and their descendants constitute an important element, and other immigrants are not insignificant. Hornsby-Smith disentangles the strands with commendable clarity, despite their complexity. In a formidable collection of tables, the contours of the Catholic community – with respect to origins, social class, social mobility, education, voting dispositions, marriage patterns, contraceptive practices – are all systematically explored and duly correlated. This array of facts should dispel a variety of illusions and stereotypes that prevail among the Protestant (and post-Protestant) majority, about the character of present-day Catholics and Catholicism.

Today Catholicism in England is a domesticated denomination increasingly indistinguishable in belief and practice from other Christians. Catholics still attend church more often: 40 per cent of the five-and-a-half million Catholics in England and Wales claim to attend at least weekly, compared to 8 per cent of the rest of the population. Like those others, however, it is the professional and managerial class that is more disposed to attend than are Catholics who are manual workers. Despite such lingering commitment, Catholics manifest a wide heterogeneity of belief and practice. Hornsby-Smith characterizes several distinct types, from "involved traditionalists" (a class

in which converts, the elderly and the children of Irish immigrants are prominent) to "heterodox non-attenders" (many of whom are young and married to non-Catholics).

In the background of such diversity is the changing character of Catholic marriage, with an increasing proportion of mixed marriages (recently as high as two-thirds of all marriages in which a Catholic is involved) and of canonically invalid marriages (about one-third). Today, Catholic marriages are just as likely to break down as any others. Beyond these demographic facts lie changing attitudes. Catholics now differ little from the general population in their attitudes to pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations, and although they are much less tolerant of abortion than are other people, they are almost equally as much in favour of divorce being made available to anyone whose spouse has committed adultery.

Catholics no longer comprise a distinctive subculture protected by endogamous marriage and with a moral code of its own. Nor is there anything approaching a common orientation to social and political issues. The vociferous Catholic lay élite, committed not only to the new liturgy but to a variety of political causes from nuclear disarmament to enhanced moral permissiveness, does not carry with it on these matters anything like a majority of those who continue to identify themselves as Catholics.

Nor is Catholicism converting outsiders as once it did. Although some 10 per cent of today's Catholics are converts to the Church, at least 16 per cent of born Catholics have ceased to identify themselves as such. A little belatedly, the process of secularization is steadily eroding Catholicism – as before it eroded Protestant – religiously in England.

Church and Parish by J. H. Betley (174pp. Batsford. £14.95. 0 7134 5101 7), traces the historical involvement of the Church in local communities, and its response to political and social changes. Its chapters range from "Saxon Christianity" through "The Reformation Changes" to that on Church revival of the nineteenth century. Betley draws on archaeological and architectural sources, bishop's registers, church-wardens' accounts and the Church courts records to discuss "the changing framework of belief" and "elucidate the religious ideas" of parishioners.

Blaming the beasts

A. W. B. Simpson

E. P. EVANS
The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals: The lost history of Europe's animal trials
330pp. Faber. Paperback, £4.95.
0571 14893 X

We are told today that animals have rights; this book speaks to a time when, not so very long ago, it would seem that they were thought to have obligations and responsibilities as well. It was originally published in 1904, its author being an American scholar steeped in curious learning, who spent much of his life in Germany increasing his stock of it. His taste as a writer was for the devious and obscure, as this book, together with others on animal psychology, and on animal symbolism in architecture, witness.

The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals is principally concerned to catalogue and discuss two distinct but related practices, which it does in a somewhat rambling though highly entertaining way. One was that of trying to control plagues of locusts, mice, or whatever, by priestly injunctions sanctioned by curses, threats or excommunication; the modern chemical industry has of course now taken over this useful function from the Church. There is nothing peculiarly puzzling about such attempts to control the natural world, *faute de mieux*, by supernatural means: what does seem strange is the extent to which in earlier centuries the bugs and beasts involved were accorded legal protection, for example representation by counsel.

This apparent misapplication of legalism is more pronounced in relation to the second practice, from which the book derives its title: the custom of actually trying and punishing animals for crimes they have committed. Of course we still apply notions of guilt and responsibility to pets, and occasionally to other creatures. When, as happened not long ago in a British zoo, a recidivist tiger killed the second of its keepers, it had to be shot, and surely not simply as a safety precaution. But it did not have its day in court, and what is so weird about the stories collected here is the solemn application by learned lawyers and ecclesiastics of legal forms and rituals to the condemnation of brutes, especially in a European context in which a rigid conceptual distinction was drawn between those who had souls and those who did not.

Of the many instances discussed by E. P. Evans, the spirited defence of a number of rats cited before the ecclesiastical court at Autun, early in the sixteenth century, is as engaging as any. Their counsel, the jurist Bartholomé Chassenée, argued that their failure to appear was excusable; they had no safe-conduct and justifiably feared the local cats. He had previously succeeded in securing a delay in the proceedings upon the ground that they had received inadequate notice of the proceedings. Chassenée established his reputation as a lawyer, and not as a lunatic or buffoon, in these proceedings, and subsequently wrote a treatise on the matter.

Was all this some kind of elaborate joke, an essay in the absurd, an irreverent parody of the



A detail from Bosch's vineyard triptych, reproduced from Hieronymus Bosch and the Certitude of Isaiah by Marshall Neal Myers and Wayne Dynes (207pp. New York: Carbin. \$13.95. 0 961 76360 4).

An enemy of promises

Peter Birks

P. S. ATIYAH
Essays on Contract
363pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £30.
019825551

The Oxford law school boasts two of the world's best contract lawyers. G. H. Treitel, without scorning modernization, scrupulously maintains the old edifice. Restlessly critical, P. S. Atiyah teaches that we are at heart contract creatures. Already one book from the Atiyah school has described a law of contract in the familiar fragments serve only to mock the returning visitor who knew the old place well. There will be more of this, for Atiyah's influence befits a great academic lawyer of charismatic energy, exciting and generous. There is, besides, the danger that he may be right. Yet, to the other school, this turmoil is a nightmare from which the law must wake.

Updated, these collected *Essays on Contract* now lace around the books in which Atiyah's thought can be more fully read. Chapter eight, "Consideration: a restatement", shows what brilliant deconstruction of a de-caying orthodoxy can achieve. Not long ago the core of English contract was still: a promise binds if under seal (if it is made in the form of a deed) or supported by consideration (if something, anything, is given in return). But stresses within that central orthodoxy were matched by irregular growth without; American influence got in, with Lord Denning as the unlikely fifth column. Atiyah saw that the doctrine of consideration must fall, and in 1971 he pulled it down. Nowadays common lawyers all teach something new. Some do it (as Atiyah would prefer) within a reinterpretation of consideration – or a revival of an older version – as requiring not a price for the promise but simply some sound reason for enforcing it; others do it as a supplement beyond the established doctrine, under the name of promissory estoppel. Atiyah admits that, even when there is no seal, a promise for which nothing is given can become binding once the promisee relies on it to his detriment. This has been a revolution in the old law, and it is a grim warning to those whose inclination is to pool-pool the new:

"A part is one thing, the whole building quite another. The preceding paragraph assumes, as Atiyah's eighth chapter originally did and still fitfully does despite being updated to harmonize with his more radical recent thought, that the central preoccupation of the law of contract is this question: when is a promise legally binding? Or, perhaps more accurately, that contract is concerned with the legal effects of consent to be bound, often manifested, though not always, in some word of promising. Legal history confirms this innocent assumption. Thus in the thirteenth-century foundations of the common law we already find the writ of covenant, with its "Order the defendant that he keep his agreement (*conventionem suam*)"; and then, later, the action "why whereas he undertook (*assumpsit*)". Nor is this just an English story. In Rome, when Gaius said, about AD160, that obligations arose from contract, delict or other events, the jurist's "contract" already reflected the philosopher's category of voluntary obligations. In seventeenth-century Scotland, Stair based his treatment of contract on the same Aristotelian division: obligations were either obligational or conventional – imposed or by consent.

This conception of contract as promise, though reassessed by Fried at Harvard, has cracks. And into these the "Death of Contract" movement of which Atiyah is a leader – the name comes from the acute but in some respects unlearned book of Grant Gilmore's 1970 Ohio lectures – has driven wedges. For example, writings bind though signed unread; words take their meaning as perceived, not as intended; people are saddled with "implied" terms (a seller must answer for his right to sell). How can it be said in these cases that there is consent to be bound? To problems of this kind, Atiyah in his tenth chapter here rather sharply adds the manifestly non-consensual obligation of the contract breaker to pay damages. Austin would have winced. The remedial obligation is born of breach, and no one argues that the wrong of breach of contract, any more than the wrong of trespass, is a contract. Nevertheless, the other difficulties are real.

"Death of Contract" meant, for reasons such as these, two things: principally, the end of contract's unity in promise – and hence a law of contracts, not contract; and, secondarily, an insistence that no contractual problem could be solved without one eye on the law of tort. That is, there would have to be, not a law of promising but a law of a list of common transactions, and the law for those transactions

would have to be linked closely with the law of wrongs, especially wrongs such as fraud and negligent misrepresentation. "Con-tort" was Gilmore's term for these jazzed-up second-century truths.

Atiyah's Chapter Ten, "Misrepresentation, Warranty and Estoppel", demonstrates the contextual proximity of contract and tort, without convincing the sceptic that the analytical distance between them has shortened. His first and second chapters – "The Modern Role of Contract Law" and "Contracts, Promises and Obligations" – elaborate the principal "Death of Contract" theme. He redefines contract's business, *post mortem*, as "co-operative activity". But he proclaims new birth. For this miscellaneous law of co-operation does after all have its unifying theory. Behind the rhetoric of promise and agreement, what the courts have really been about, he says, is the paternalistic recognition of obligations – obligational, not voluntary – to make good reliance losses and to pay for benefits received. An imposed régime for smoothing out benefits and losses requires discretion. The courts have equipped themselves for the task. So says Chapter Eleven on "Contract and Fair Exchange". Very bad bargains can suggest fraud or imposition. Inverting, Atiyah infers from relief for fraud and other interference with the mechanism of consent a judicial drive towards fairness of exchange.

The Atiyah theory, based on the view that what really generates obligations is detrimental reliance or receipt of benefit, requires no less than the total deconstruction of promises, in themselves (ie, without reliance or benefit) chimerical; and with them, their remedial outlook, the fulfilment in kind or money of expectations. In his essay on "Executory Contracts, Expectation Damages, and the Economic Analysis of Contract", Atiyah cuts away the foundations, philosophical and economic, for holding people to their promises. The Court of Appeal remains unpersuaded. It recently condemned *Bain v. Fothergill* as anomalous, precisely because *Bain* stood for an inhibition of normal expectation damages, ie, damages which calculate a promisee's loss from the position the contract would have put him in.

In Atiyah's scheme promises do not have even a long-stop role, as stipulation and the incommensurate doctrine did have in Rome. His fifth chapter, "Form and Substance in Contract

law? Or did such proceedings in some elusive way make sense to contemporaries? Evans makes it clear that jokes were not involved, but is not himself deeply interested in explaining the legal formalism of the trials. It is true that he discusses the belief in demonic possession which ecclesiastics employed to rationalize their attitude to errant beasts, such as cocks which laid eggs, but why should demons enjoy the benefits of due process of law? Evans was primarily fascinated by a phenomenon which, in other forms, is familiar to us all: scholarly rubbish. It was familiar to him, for example, the work of the contemporary neuropathologist Herr von Bodelschwingh, who attributed epilepsy to the presence of the *bacillus infernalis*, which, endowed with two horns and a tail, possessed the power to turn the investigator's gelatine culture medium black so as to exhale a pestilential smell. In the concluding part of his book he developed a criticism of contemporary criminological theories, particularly those of Lombroso, whom he seems to have regarded as yet another purveyor of learned twaddle, as indeed in a sense he was.

In his foreword Nicholas Humphrey attempts, however, a functional explanation. It is that the trials were a mechanism for establishing cognitive control over the external world – "the job of the courts was to domesticate chaos, to impose order on a world of accidents – and specifically to make sense of certain seemingly inexplicable events by redefining them as crimes." If this is convincing it prompts the reflection that the gulf which seems to separate our world from that of animal trials is not so deep. For this surely continues to be one of the functions served by the rituals of the criminal trial.

THE TIMES

The other Booker six.

Editors!! Always talking structure, always

on about length, always niggling about ~~repp~~ repetition, too much, or/little, always wanting ~~rythm~~ ^{600/} ~~rythm~~, whatever that is, something about

short and long sentences, saying things like, "the ~~chawfer~~ on page 46 needs context". ^{chawfer} ~~chawfer~~

Telling you things like, "you need more dialogue" or, "you need less dialogue". And always, always

nit-picking. He said at one point, "you know, ~~your spelling~~ ^{spelling} your spelling is just awful". ^{spelling} ~~spelling~~

I said, look, you didn't commission me to write a blessed dictionary. Of course, I shall take the

next one somewhere else. I mean, you'd think the man's name was on the ~~jaket~~ ^{jaket} ~~jaket~~

which God forbid. No doubt he'll be taking the credit for it making the Booker shortlist.

And if it wins, well, he'll be just insufferable

Next Wednesday.

Composing in the dark

Abraham Brumberg

BENJAMIN AND BARBARA HARSHAV
American Yiddish Poetry: A bilingual
anthology
700pp. University of California Press. £34.65.
0520048423

This handsome volume is much more than yet another nostalgic monument to a vanishing culture. It is a work that succeeds, often brilliantly, in rendering one of the most "rich and buoyant" chapters of that culture into an idiom accessible to all English-language readers of modern literature. The chapter was short-lived, spanning half a century (approximately 1918 to 1970), and geographically centred, with only a few exceptions, in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx. Its contributors were two to three dozen men and women, all born in Eastern Europe, who came to the United States in their late teens or early twenties. Few of them had received a higher education, though some managed to take degrees in American universities. All, however, were forced to eke out a living either as carpenters, shoemakers and paperhangers, or (the luckier ones) as Yiddish journalists.

They read voraciously, augmenting their already rich cultural baggage (Russian, German, Polish, French and Hebrew literature) with a knowledge of and a passion for the modernist schools of poetry (Objectivism, Acmeism, Imagism) that flourished in the United States at that time. They published their verse in Yiddish newspapers and journals, and some founded small journals of their own. As if brushed by a foreboding of the fate awaiting their people, their culture, and their language, they wrote feverishly and produced, in an astonishingly brief period of time, a body of poetry comparable in its sweep and quality to the work of their American English-language contemporaries.

The word "American" is important, as the editors make clear. (Benjamin Harshav [Ilrushovskii] was until recently Professor of Poetics and Comparative Literature at Tel Aviv University and is now at Yale University; his wife Barbara is a historian and translator.) Both their introduction and the nearly 300 poems contained in the anthology (printed on facing pages in Yiddish and English) demonstrate that this poetry embodied two characteristics. It was autonomous – that is, different in some respects both from "the English poetry next door" and from the work of the Yiddish poets in Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union (most of it influenced by prevailing European trends) and it was "truly American". While the poets "were quarantined", as the editors aptly put it, "within their alien language", they were determined to strike roots in their adopted soil, and they responded to it, whatever their political sympathies or artistic mode of expression, from a distinctively American perspective.

The same is true of the poets' attitude toward their "Old Home". Most of them rejected as false and irrelevant the dichotomy between "Jewish" and "universal", but as the menace to European Jewry increased, Jewish motifs began to predominate. The smells, harshness and dizzying tempo of daily life in New York, the pastoral landscapes of Kentucky, or purely personal themes, yielded to anguish and horror over the Holocaust, a horror made more piercing by the realization that the gas chambers signalled the death, too, of their own chapter of Yiddish literature – in fact the death of Yiddish literature *in toto*. Remaining loyal to the principles of their craft, they reacted as modern artists and as Jews. Thus Jacob Glatshyn, who transmutes the "very final Holocaust" into – as the editors observe – something "very private".

Sound we'd have lost all the words:
The slimmer-mouths are growing silent.
The heritage-back is empty. Where can we get
The holy prattle of promised
Joy? A child's grins
Are an alien spit-language.
In the dark we compose
Lightning words, fast extinguished.
And ash becomes their meaning.
And ash becomes their meaning.

Of all the many schools of Yiddish poetry

that flourished in that fateful half-century, the most self-consciously programmatic was that of the so-called *introspektivists* (Introspectivists – from the words *in zikh*, in oneself). The Introspectivists are patently closest to the editors' hearts, for a good part of their introductory essay is devoted to the aesthetic principles (very roughly, reacting to the external world through one's own personal psyche, perceptions and experience) as well as the prosodic forms (mainly free verse and a variety of rhythmic devices) espoused by that group. In addition, one of the appendices in the anthology contains the text of the Introspectivists' manifesto (published in 1919), and excerpts from the theoretical writings of two of their major representatives, Glatshyn and A. Leyev.

The preferential treatment is understandable, inasmuch as the Introspectivists embodied, more impressively than any other group, the quintessential values of modernism. None the less, it is somewhat lop-sided. Of the seven poets represented in the anthology, only three were "legitimate" *introspektivists* (Glatshyn, Leyev and I. L. Teller). Two, Malka Heifetz-Tussman and Barysh Vaynshteyn, wrote highly individualistic verse, and the remaining two (M. L. Halpern and H. Leyvik) had embarked on their literary careers as members of *Di Yunge* (The Young Ones), or in the Harshav's rendering, the "Young Generation", against whose more conventional metrical forms and lyrical proclivities the Introspectivists had rebelled. Moreover, the "Young Ones", towards the end of the first decade of this century, had staged their own rebellion against their predecessors, the "proletarian" and national poets (whose output, as one of *Di Yunge*'s spokesmen once remarked with more bite than justice, was little more than "the rhyme department of the Jewish labor movement"). By the 1930s, young no longer, they were distinguished more by their differences than by an adherence to a collective credo. Halpern had broken ranks early, developing a blend of corrosive sarcasm, bravado, grotesquerie and whimsical tenderness (all well represented in the anthology). Leyvik became an author of powerful dramatic verse, tinged with national romanticism and visionary fervour (equally well represented).

Similarly, the Introspectivists eventually went their own ways. Leyev continued to experiment with new forms, disguising his grief, twenty years after the Holocaust, in almost abstract terms ("What do people do in the days? / They hate each other, my dear. / What do people think in the nights? / Of evil to do, my dear"). Glatshyn, no less linguistically inventive than Leyev, made the destruction of the Jews an explicit, indeed pre-eminent, subject of concern. However fascinating the history of Introspectivism, it would have been useful to have had a few more comments about the other poets represented here.

That quibble aside, one can only praise the editors, who offer among other things an excellent summary of the history of Yiddish and Yiddish literature, a useful glossary and photographs. Many of the pages are graced by drawings of American Jewish artists such as Max Weber, Chaim Gross and Ben Shahn, whose work, as the editors note, reflect the modernist aesthetic and thematic concerns displayed by Yiddish poetry at that time. The translations (most of them by the editors, some by Kathryn Hellerstein, Brian McHale and Anita Norich) are admirable. The reader without Yiddish is fully rewarded. But only those who can compare the originals with the translations will be aware of how close they are in spirit and in texture, and of the amount of sheer skill and intelligence that went into the English versions.

The study of Yiddish and Yiddish literature is becoming akin to an archaeological discipline. Beginning with Irving Howe's and Eliezer Greenberg's English-language *A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry* published eighteen years ago, the excavations have proceeded apace. Later this year, Penguin will publish another bilingual anthology, edited by Howe, Ruth Wise and Chone Shmeruk, encompassing the work of thirty-seven Yiddish poets from Europe, the United States and Israel. The Harshavs are planning a second, more representative bilingual volume of American Yiddish poetry. Thus gradually, posthumously, the quarantine is finally being lifted.

Critical capsules

Mark Ford

MUTLU KONUK BLASING
American Poetry: The rhetoric of its forms
248pp. Yale University Press. £24.
0300137937

Ever since Harold Bloom's Freudian theories of poetic influence began to go forth and multiply in the mid-1970s, much of the criticism written about American poetry has seemed an oddly cohesive business. Emerson sits on throned as Big Daddy, both progenitor and ultimate authority, and all succeeding poets became so many coordinates to be plotted in relation to his achievement. Those indifferent to it – Eliot, Lowell, Berryman – are so much waste paper.

This sensible new survey of the field by Mutlu Konuk Blasing takes a shrewd look at many of the more exuberant of Bloom's generalities before setting out to replace his single genealogy with four distinct lines of succession. These new ancestries she proposes, however, are based mainly on affinities of temperament; or, more precisely, on the various ways in which her representative poets have attempted to come to terms with the discontinuities that are the central experience of American poetry.

Her analysis and categorization of the different types of rhetorical strategy certainly throw up some odd groupings. Eliot, for instance, would be most surprised, and perhaps slightly nonplussed, to find himself orbiting eternally in the same critical capsule as Edgar Allan Poe and Sylvia Plath. Blasing's connections here depend on the way all three are obsessed with an almost mechanical formalism – Poe's "The Raven" is the most obvious and extreme example of this – that rigorously denies all possibilities of free will or individual expression. The unseated Emerson is linked now only with Stevens and Elizabeth Bishop, who each create a "fictive music" that mediates between nature and the imagination without forcing the relationship into the sort of consummation the more apocalyptic geniuses of Whitman, Pound, and O'Hara crave in their pursuit of "original energy". Again, for Pound, who spent his cosmopolitan life attempting to escape the provincial solecisms of Whitman,

there would surely be something bitter in this configuration.

The final group, the "ironic literalists", Blasing exemplifies with studies of Dickinson, Hart Crane, and John Ashbery. Theirs is an art of detachment and deferral, that moves obliquely between discourses, hoping, almost through exhaustion, to reveal the extreme absence behind life's disguises. Systems proliferate throughout their work, endlessly cohering and dispersing, and creating an odd double life, the poetry shuttling between its provisional, literal meaning and larger awarenesses; or as Ashbery puts it:

We must first trick the idea
Into being, then dismantle it,
Scattering the pieces on the wind . . .

Blasing hopes in her introduction that these new types of definition will also prove helpful in evaluating achievements, but in fact her text is scrupulously fair to each of her poets. This can be reductive – if Pound's thought can really be boiled down to a simple organicism what was all the fuss about? – while Eliot's absolute superiority as a poet to both Poe and Plath has to be suppressed for her section on them to make intellectual sense. What is exciting about her book, though, is her willingness to see American poetry as divisive, its radically different styles coexistent rather than unified. In fact, behind the state-of-the-art critical language she deploys – plenty of synchronic typing of diachronic subjects and so on – lies a sound, even old-fashioned conception of poetry as emanating from the writer's personality, and, that said, some poets being more like each other than others. There is no more presumption in this than in linking Larkin to Hardy.

American poetry – and criticism – are different, though, and most especially in the finality of their pronouncements. If the critics want to join everyone together in one definitive unhappy family, the poets, as Blasing often makes clear, can seem suspended in private darknesses, seemingly unconscious of each other, even mutually exclusive. Underpinning this book is an awareness of the bizarre cultural isolation American poets suffer, the almost absolute anomaly of their situation, and the completely original, and by definition unrepeatable, methods they have evolved for dealing with it.

Networks

End of the party: time to offer friends

To the foreigner.

– Where are you going, sir?

– North for a bit, then west.

Ed recommends

An Apache sculptor, aura-balancer,

Wells Fargo money-minder to the stars,

Ethnomusician. Tom and Marion

Give me an acupuncturist near Taos,

A Persian-carpet-dealer in Tucson,

A Choctaw woman (pity, no address),

A graphics programmer with a private press . . .

Such generous social helpings! In a year

I shall have friends to offer these friends to:

Expert on hunger, film-sound-engineer,

Inventor of the Pill, a southern Jew,

A gay psychiatrist, gay classicist,

Redneck philosopher, holist, black girl deck-hand,

Wigmaker, pulmonary therapist,

Yoga carpenter, Chinese diamond-merchant,

Hard-riding, yachting septuagenarians . . .

At home, I just know poets and librarians.

ALISTAIR ELLIOT

Memory and desire

Jasper Rees

LEE LANGLEY
Changes of Address
172pp. Collins. £9.95.
000223240

Changes of Address is a tangle of fact and fiction. Lee Langley's fifth book has the veneer of autobiography, but the difficulty of recovering the past from the blur of human memory introduces elements of speculation and invention which turn personal narrative into novel.

The persona Langley adopts is christened Margaret-Rose, "after the little princess", but is known as Maggie. She is the only issue of a hasty, ill-conceived marriage between a retired Englishman stationed in India and a Scots-woman who accepts him only because her father disapproves of his "fascinating eyes". This spirit of rebellion confines the union to the short-term, whereafter Maggie and Moti (the daughter's babyish corruption of "mother"; also, coincidentally and inappropriately, Hindi for "pearl") roam the resorts of the subcontinent – the nomadic existence to which the title refers.

The narrative is largely concerned with Maggie's grudging (her own word) disapproval of the way of life they have adopted. Her mother's nomadism is sexual as well as geographical; she is also an alcoholic. But her most damaging habit is to lie about her daughter's age in order that she may lie about her own. In fact, Maggie, living entirely among her elders, is prematurely adult. In her rare encounters with other children she has to learn "the code of talking like a child". Early on, she knows the *Decameron* and the *Rubidya*, her mother's only two books, inside out: "thanks to Bocca-

ccio, I was familiar with catamites, sodomites, simony and carnal appetites".

These volumes are the foundation of Maggie's education, and, not surprisingly, she yearns for formal schooling. When she eventually attends it, school confirms Maggie as a baby-adult hybrid: she finds herself grappling with maths in the six-year-olds' class, then matter-of-factly explaining to less enlightened girls of her own age how and why the schoolmistress has become pregnant. For this she is nearly expelled; in fact her punishment, not to talk to her fellow pupils during break, is if anything worse.

Long before her final change of address, when they return to England and the "dreary suburban pigeonhole" she has craved and Moti has avoided for too many years, Maggie comes to hate her outrageous, nymphomaniac mother. She has the chance to purge herself of this hatred just before Moti finally emigrates to Australia: "now might I do it pat, pour out the years, spare her nothing", but the chance passes. Instead, she attempts to salvage a lost childhood through words. But her split narrative defers to the impossibility of this effort: her present-historic, third-person reconstruction of events is the plain, prose equivalent of a child tidying its toy cupboard; it alternates with a doubling first-person voice which disputes the truth of stories refracted through Moti's gin-sodden memory. When, in the closing pages, the adult Maggie emerges as a writer ("a watcher, not a doer; a recorder, not a performer"), the link between her and Langley is confirmed. But once the irreversibility of the past has been acknowledged, all that either writer has to offer is a truism – that adversity is usually the spur to creativity, while anodyne family life, into which Maggie gladly settles, is often its scourge.

Bombay mix

Ashok Bery

SAADAT HASAN MANTO
Kingdom's End and Other Stories
Translated by Khalid Hasan
257pp. Verso. £9.95.
0860911837

In August 1954, a year before he drank himself to death, the Urdu writer Saadat Hasan Manto composed an immodest epitaph: "Here lies Saadat Hasan Manto. With him lie buried all the arts and mysteries of short-story writing. Under tons of earth he lies, wondering if he is a greater short-story writer than God." This self-conscious bravado, coupled with his determination to tell the truth, made him a controversial figure in Urdu literature. He was often at odds with authority and came under fire from both radicals and conservatives for his alleged sensationalism.

Kingdom's End is the first substantial English translation of Manto's work to be published outside the Indian subcontinent. Many of the stories in this collection focus on the fringes of Bombay life, with its petty gangsters, prostitutes, small-time actors and professional hangers-on. But Manto's most powerful subject was the Partition of India. He gives an unflinching portrayal of Partition as it affected the ordinary men and women who committed and suffered acts of appalling violence. One of

the bleakest of his stories, "Colder than Ice" (the title is an unnecessarily euphemistic rendering of Manto's brutal "Thanda Gosh", "Cold Meat"), concerns a Sikh who rapes a young Muslim woman, only to find, when he has finished, that he has raped a corpse.

This story shows signs of Manto's occasional tendency to coddle the reader with horrifying revelations. What is characteristic of his best work, though, is a wry, sardonic refusal to be shocked. His attitude is that of a man who can no longer be surprised by the things people do to each other, but who nevertheless retains his humanity and compassion. This note is sounded very clearly in the exaggerated restraint of one of his best stories, "Toba Tek Singh", a touching, near-farical account of an exchange of lunatics between India and Pakistan.

Manto also had a streak of almost adolescent romanticism which sometimes manifests itself in the way he depicts women. Several of his stories – not included in this collection – deal with an encounter between a young man and an idealized, innocent, rural woman. Manto, the Jewish heroine of one of the Partition stories, sacrifices herself so that a former lover can save his fiancée from rioters. "By the Roadside", a monologue by a deserted pregnant woman, is a relentlessly and repetitively lyrical rhapsody. Manto could be a very uneven writer; but it is good to have the laconic, humane voice of his best work readily available in English.

Horatio Brittlebank, farmer Septimus Durdur, his wife and inarticulate son, and two sharp Londoners, who play Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson to a chorus of assorted yokels. The setting of *Sticksides*, the High Peak district of Derbyshire with its lead mines and limestone caverns, was one which John Buxton Hilton made peculiarly his own; and this last novel shows too the individuality and originality which always characterized his work.

T. J. Blynon

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by Pierre Grimal, translated by A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop

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In unconsidered corners

Edward Blishen

PENelope Lively
A House Inside Out
105pp. Deutsch. £5.95.
0233981675

It has been calculated that the human body is host to 90,000,000 other living creatures. The house that is the setting of Penelope Lively's new book shelters only five humans, nineteen animals and several thousand insects; but as in the other case, most are unscheduled occupants, and actually or virtually invisible. *A House Inside Out* belongs to that order of story, always fascinating as an idea though not always fascinatingly developed, in which the foreground is occupied by those who seem to belong to the background. So in one scene here Sam the mouse is performing heady tricks on the knees of the householder of 54 Pavilion Road, who, in staying up to watch late-night television, has seriously disarranged the mice's timetable of late-night scavenging. Finding that Mr Dixon has fallen asleep, Sam has climbed up his leg in order to gorge himself on a half-eaten cheese sandwich. The man's snoring insensibility is such that Sam becomes over-excited, and performs tricks, including superb leaps from knee to knee, for the entertainment of the mice on the carpet below. "Go on, Dad!" the children yell. "Do it again!" It ends, as an aunt of Sam's had foreseen, in tears.

Much of the book is cheerful slapstick of this kind, but the reader is always aware that tiny creatures who subscribe to one culture are at risk among the possessions of huge creatures who subscribe to quite another. So Sam finds himself trapped inside a teapot, and desperate

ingenuities, involving teams of mice and lots of strings, are needed to save him. In search of bacon-flavoured crisps, he explores the carrier on a motorbike, is inexplicably roared and rocked a great distance, and then, by a series of accidents, released in waste ground. To Sam, it was remote and alien as the moon. His return to Pavilion Road depends on another mixture of accident and cunning, and leaves him with a stupendous story to tell. "Out there," says Sam, who'd been almost asphyxiated by the rubbish dumped on the waste ground, "a mouse could breathe."

Characterizing zesty mice is not remarkably difficult and Penelope Lively does it well; it is harder to give character to a woodhouse. She succeeds by accepting the problem — "Their way of life is as stiff and awkward as their appearance" — and imagining the effect on their natures of living largely in wastepipes. She has created a modest hero among them, called Nat, whose own mother cannot tell him apart from the rest of her children, but who has a tiny, armoured amount of individuality and independence. There is also a dog called Willie, recklessly foolish, an irritable spider whose territory is a bedroom window, and a racing pigeon who unsettles Sam by telling tales of a larger world. In speech the pigeon is like any almanac ("You just had to get into automatic pilot and bask on, hoping for the best.")

It is broad stuff, on the whole, broadly enjoyable, and no joke is overstretched. We retain a sense of the house as the setting for imperceptible dramas and scuttling types of comedy. The illustrations by David Parkins give a due impression of the unconsidered corners of rooms, and of baths, washbasins and cisterns seen at odd angles through tiny, anxious eyes.

The seasonal round

Gerald Mangan

ANGELA BALL
Vixie
138pp. Oxford. £6.95.
0192715550

A fit of pique over a telling-off, a tearful retreat to a garden hiding-place, and an unfussy reconciliation establish the character of Angela Ball's umbrilic impulsive heroine in the opening pages of *Vixie*. Eleven-year-old Martha Bowden is the eldest daughter of a poor shepherd, living on the edge of a Wiltshire village at the turn of the century; her nickname clearly derives more from her mop of carrotty hair than any truly vixenish qualities. She's shy with some grown-ups, given to daydreaming, and sometimes too sensitive about her scuffed boots; but her usefulness in the house extends to baby-sitting the toddler and reading penny-romances aloud to her mother. She is lively, and quick to worry over the rumours of change that threaten their close-knit community.

The passing of the local squirearchy, the phasing-out of hill-grazing and the coming of the mechanical reaper make this a fraught period of transition; but the historical backdrop emerges unobtrusively from Ball's evocative miniature tapestry of the seasonal round. *Vixie's* initial focus is on the everyday intricacies of family and village life, in the full glow of summer, when the final term at school is enveloped by a youthful new teacher and a terrifying visit from a school-inspector. In the long days of sheep-shearing and hay-making, her deepest preoccupation is a vague mystery about her origins; but the presence in class of former Shergold's genteel daughter is not the only sign of failing local fortunes. "A troubled farmer makes for miserable men," says her father, darkly; and after the Manor is sold, it is not long before he gets notice to quit both his job and the cottage.

The Christmas concert is a colourful and amusing episode, but the celebrations are edged with unease; and the family's future already looks bleak when tragedy strikes, and breaks their world apart. Shepherd Bowden dies on the hill, in a January blizzard, and the black day of the funeral shades into grey when his widow is forced to move, with the two younger children, to seek work in a distant cathedral-town. *Vixie* is left behind, at the age

of twelve, to earn her living as a skivvy in the local rectory, where an unworried vicar collects spiders in jars, and a grumpy cook sets her a seemingly impossible schedule of household chores. The harshness of this initiation, which re-creates the realities of domestic service in startling detail, inspires full sympathy for her loneliness and disorientation.

Her new taskmasters show streaks of kindness, and her abrupt ejection from the garden of childhood is not quite Dickensian in its starkness. But this is a mildly moral tale, nevertheless, in which the beginnings of maturity are marked by a capacity to make the best of her misfortunes, and a growing understanding of her mother — whose greater misery is sharply revealed by *Vixie's* first expedition into the outside world. The two sharply-contrasted halves of the book have only narrowly regained a sense of unity by the end, which brings us back to the verge of spring on a faintly contrived biblical note; but *Vixie* is a memorably life-like creation, and her story makes an unsentimental affirmation of the virtues in a vanished way of life. "In the country, things should happen slowly and steadily and in the proper time. That's what country life is all about." Its crisply laconic style will be best appreciated by readers rather older than its heroine, who can follow the more rapid scene-changes and keep track of a crowded cast.

The shortlist for the 1987 Smarties Prize has recently been announced. The fifteen books selected from an entry of 250 titles are, in the under 5 age group: *The Angel and the Soldier Boy* by Peter Collington (Methuen), *Nancy No-Size* by Mary Hoffman (Methuen), *Captain Tohy* by Satoshi Kitamura (Blackie), *A Day of Rhymes* by Sarah Pooley (Bodley Head), and *Oscar Got the Blame* by Tony Ross (Andersen). In the 6-8 age group: *Lead Me Your Wings* by John Agard (Hodder and Stoughton), *Talkie, Talkie Before* by Bernard Ashley (Orchard), *Tangle and the Firesticks* by Benedict Blighway (Jollie MacRae), *The Trouble with Gran* by Babette Cole (Helmman) and *Fancy Nancy* by Ruth Craig (Collins). In the 9-11 age group: *A Thief in the Village* by James Berry (Hamish Hamilton), *Jack the Treacle Eater* by Charles Causley (Macmillan), *Through the Dells: How Dory* by Jane Gardam (Jollie MacRae), *Tumbleweed* by Dick King-Smith (Collins), and *How's Business* by Alison Prince (Deutsch).

Between land and sea

John Mole

CLIVE KING
The Seashore People
96pp. Viking Kestrel. £7.50.
0670817236

Lisha, the heroine of Clive King's haunting fable *The Seashore People*, is discovered at the water's edge. She is on her hands and knees, puzzling over a pair of footprints which appear to belong to some creature that has walked off the land into the sea. They are strangely familiar to her, and similar to her own, except that when she attempts to place her feet in them she realizes what is missing. There are no hand prints beside them.

With this realization comes the reader's: that Lisha is, herself, one of the seashore people, an all-fours water child whose name is the song of the waves. As she swims back to the rocks to rejoin her family she is in her element but, of course, her discovery has ensured that it is only a matter of time before she meets the land people and, in particular, the land child Yaku whose name is clearly the clamorous chant of the earth. Their encounter is as hesitant as it is destined, and takes place like a waking dream against the backdrop of a beach where humans sport on the shore. Sport at first, that is, in a vision of pre-lapsarian innocence — but then, in the book's final tableau, the sea children join the land children in a stone-throwing game which goes wrong. The sky darkens. Someone is hurt. The adults hurry to join in, but the situation is saved, paradoxically, by a bull-storm which sends the two sides scurrying for shelter. Yaku and Lisha part like a Ferdinand and Miranda who are not yet able to inherit the brave new world of their imagination, to unite the principles of land and water.

Yaku splashed to the beach and ran off after his own people. Lisha sat in the sea, covered her head with her arms, and watched him. Her friend was gone. But half-way to the dunes, Yaku turned and waved. "See you!" Lisha shouted, and waved back. "See you!" it seemed to say. She had still got a friend. Lots of friends, perhaps. Some day all the people would play together on the beach, and it wouldn't be a dream.

The Seashore People is certainly an ambitious book, and for all its apparent simplicity full of literary echoes. The "dream beach" which becomes its focus owes much to a vision-



Caplain and Harper marking the Ilkerson Hall, one of C. F. Tunnicliffe's wood-engravings for the Nonesuch edition of Tarka the Otter: His joyful water-life and death in the country of the two rivers by Henry Williamson. This edition, published in 1964, is now reprinted by the Bodley Head to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the book's first publication.

ary tradition which stretches from Langland's "field full of folk" to Wordsworth's Immortality Ode, and King glances more than occasionally in the direction of William Golding's *The Inheritors*. Most of all, though, I am reminded of Randall Jarrell's marvellous *The Animal Family*, especially in the chapters where, searching for the origin of the footprints, Lisha communicates with the various creatures that live between land and water.

The story is a mysterious and absorbing one, but it sometimes seems that King is unmoved by the intensity of his theme. Although many passages in *The Seashore People* are narrated with the firm impersonal clarity of folk lore there are several misjudged effects when the tone goes coy and chatty as if to remind young readers that it's only a tale, and that a water child can indulge in self-conscious banalities like anyone else: "What on earth, or what in water was that?" This is a pity because, although it puts a friendly face on things — as does an excessive use of italicized exclamations to indicate Lisha's response to the unfamiliar — it tends to domesticate what, with a little more imaginative daring, might have become truly rich and strange.

The return of Nemo

J. K. L. Walker

HARRIET GRAHAM
The Chinese Puzzle
180pp. Deutsch. £6.50.
0233980725

Harriet Graham's *The Chinese Puzzle* offers readers the latest thinking on the old problem of the Limehouse opium den run by evil Orientals. This, as first defined by staff writers on Edwardian boys' weeklies, was to think up something new for the next issue. Confined in their noisome dens by evil editors, these unhappy men abandoned themselves to lurid dreams of rat-infested secret passages, enervated aristocrats, impractical tortures and the weekly advance of the Yellow Peril (staining, one imagines, the pink areas of the map an unacceptable pale orange). A decent pause of half a century or more, allows Miss Graham to approach matters with a clear head and a cleaner prose style.

Although she discards many of its baroque elements, *The Chinese Puzzle* is still at heart a romantic yarn in the old style. There is fog, there is menace lurking in cobbled City courtyards, there is the sinister hansom cab and the chloroform pad, all these lying in wait for William and his sister Flora as they set off in search of their guardian, Samuel Rolapson, a stage musician. The build-up to this moment is well contrived. As the story opens, William and Flora are on the eve of departing for a country holiday with the Cockney housekeeper Nellie, a former theatrical dresser, but they are

thrown into a frenzy of curiosity by the arrival at their Kensington house of the Great Chang, a mysterious Chinaman, who is warmly greeted by Samuel. After their holiday at Nellie's sister's farmhouse is cut short by illness, the children are put on the train back to London, only to find, on their arrival, a locked house and, when they eventually break in, the telegram announcing their return unopened on the doormat.

After this solidly imagined opening, it is high-ho for Chinatown, via the stage-door of the Alhambra, the shadowy bookseller's in Paternoster Court and (the chloroform pad intervening — "No speaky, no screamie... You go sleepy now") the hold of an opium-packed "wherrie", curiously registered as the "SS Gloriana, London". By now teamed up with the Cockney oyster-seller Dick, William and Flora defiantly endure the threats of the evil master-mind Nemo in the opium den and, eventually, through their courage and resourcefulness, are present to see him brought to justice during the Great Chang's performance at the Alhambra.

Harriet Graham painstakingly reassembles these long-dissed fictional props but, lacking the vulgar gusto and inventiveness of her predecessors (and their robust contempt for the moral standards of foreigners), is unable to breathe fresh life into the genre. This is a pity for her child characters and the 1890s London background are on the whole convincingly done (although Kensington children would surely have settled for trams rather than the hansoms for which William and Flora seem to have a weakness).

Bred in the USA: better philosophers

continued from page 1166

burgh, says on the first page of his *Theory and Evidence* (1980), "If it is true that there are but two kinds of people in the world — the logical positivists and the god-damned English professors — then I suppose that I am a logical positivist."

One result of the divide between the two traditions is that analytic philosophy has become highly technical. This isn't just a matter of an emphasis on such specialized subjects as the philosophy of logic, science and mathematics, though there is such an emphasis. The technicality also affects the way analytic philosophers address the central, non-specialist questions of epistemology and metaphysics. Thus, when Hilary Putnam argues that there is no gap between the objective world and the world as humans find it, he rests his argument on a deep theorem of mathematical logic, the Lowenheim-Skolem result that any satisfiable first-order theory has a denumerable model.

When Saul Kripke argues that the mind can't be identical to the brain, his reasoning depends on a highly original logical analysis of the way names and definite descriptions behave in modal contexts. To understand what Donald

Davidson says about meaning, you need to know how the logician Alfred Tarski constructed truth-predicates for formalized languages. To work on probability or causation, you need to grasp the structure of quantum mechanics.

Of course not every philosophical argument that appeals to difficult technical assumptions is a good argument. There are cases where technical sophistication serves only to hide bad thinking. It is arguable, for instance — and Ian Hacking argues it in his *Representing and Intervening* (1983) — that any half-way competent logician could drive a truck through the holes in Putnam's use of the Lowenheim-Skolem theorem. On the other hand, it is equally arguable that Kripke's and Davidson's uses of logic theory will make a lasting mark on Western philosophy, and that quantum mechanics will bring about a permanent change in our concept of causation.

In any case, and whatever the rights and wrongs of the particular arguments, it's clear that if you are going to be any good at this kind of philosophy, you'd better not be the kind of person who goes weak at the knees when you see symbols and equations. This is where the

Undermining an authority

Susan James

BARRY BRUNDELL
Pierre Gassendi: From Aristotelianism to a new natural philosophy
210pp. Reidel/Kluwer. PO Box 989, 3300 AZ Dordrecht, The Netherlands. £49.
912714288

Portraits of Pierre Gassendi are unusual among those of seventeenth-century philosophers for their cheerfulness. Unlike his contemporary Descartes, for example, who fixes us with a piercing and troubled eye, Gassendi smiles out shrewdly, observer and participant in the human comedy. Nothing could be more appropriate, one might think, for a dedicated follower of Epicurus. But the image does not of course conform to the grave stereotype of the famous philosopher, and it is perhaps by that stereotype that Gassendi and his works have been judged. For he has been largely forgotten, bypassed by an essentially ahistorical approach to philosophy and neglected by all but a small band of scholars.

Barry Brundell's absorbing book is part of an attempt to rescue him from this undeserved condition and revive a sympathetic understanding of his achievements. Such recent studies of Gassendi as there have been have tended, in Brundell's view, to cram their hero into assorted categories which he conspicuously fails to fit — sceptic, empiricist, covert atheist and so on — with the predictable result that they have failed to capture the richness and complexity of his thought. To overcome this limitation, Brundell suggests, we should pay more attention to the relation between Gassendi's life-work and his aims; we should try to recover his own conception of his intellectual project and ask what he saw himself as doing. For only when we have grasped the function of his philosophy will we be able to interpret it satisfactorily.

This tactic offers us a means of imposing some shape on an oeuvre which may well appear bafflingly diverse. Gassendi was the author of an attack on Aristotelian philosophy, a translation of Book X of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, a massive reply to Descartes's *Meditations*, a series of what we should call scientific papers, a biography of the mathematician Peiresce, a dismissal of the work of Robert Fludd, and a major Epicurean treatise, the *Synonymum Philosophicum*. Brundell argues that the principal theme of this corpus is expressed in Gassendi's earliest work, *Exercitationes paradoxicae adversus Aristoteleos*, and that all his subsequent writings should be seen as a prolonged attempt to undermine the authority of Aristotelianism. His search for a new theory led him first to Copernican astronomy, and it was only the condemnation of Galileo, combined with Gassendi's un-

which persuaded him to abandon this line of inquiry. Instead, he embarked on a study of Epicurus, which occupied him for the rest of his life and in time gave rise to his belief that, since Epicureanism shared all the strengths of Aristotelianism and had more besides, it should be adopted as an official philosophy.

Brundell's thesis has a lot to recommend it. It provides a valuable and integrated analysis of Gassendi's entire career, while also illuminating several more specific problems of interpretation. It stresses, for instance, that Gassendi's interest in scepticism never caused him to waver over Christian doctrine, and offers a persuasive account of the connection between what we should distinguish as his more scientific and his more metaphysical pieces. Gassendi remains, however, an eclectic figure who evades this further attempt to bundle him into a single box. While a desire to topple Aristotelianism was undoubtedly among his motives, it alone does not sufficiently explain the character of his mature work, which, as Brundell has to concede, is indebted to the Stoics and to contemporary scientific discoveries, as well as to a Christianized version of Epicurus.

This imposes strains on Brundell's argument, but also raises a series of fascinating questions about the role of Epicurus in Gassendi's philosophy. We know that Gassendi displayed a humanist's concern to get Epicurus right, painstakingly collecting and comparing texts and translations. At the same time, however, he used Epicurus as a vehicle, unconcernedly bringing him up to date when necessary, slotting in the conclusions of other schools where appropriate, yet always calling the result "Epicurean". Why, one might wonder, did Gassendi choose to hang his views on Epicurus, or, indeed, on anyone at all? To put the problem more abstractly, what did he see as the advantages of practising philosophy in a historical mode?

An answer to this question might yield further insights into his intentions, and could thus be used to refine the account already given by Brundell. It could also increase our understanding of the range of intellectual traditions from which seventeenth-century philosophers drew both the substance and the manner of their arguments. At the moment our grasp of these issues is often limited and shaky. Brundell is therefore quite right when he claims that the study of Gassendi's work can cast light on our picture of the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century, and his book is a tenacious and engaging contribution to that task.

Barkeley: An introduction, by Jonathan Dancy, has recently been published (165pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £17.50; paperback, £5.95, 0 631 14525 7). Dancy assumes no previous knowledge of philosophy, and the book is intended to be "accessible to first-year students and to the interested general reader."

second part of the explanation of the superiority of American philosophy comes in. In the American educational system there is much less, and much later, specialization than in Britain. British children often start being steered towards a purely arts or purely science curriculum as early as thirteen or fourteen. Kenneth Baker's proposed "national curriculum" will probably do something to block such premature channelling. But even after his proposed reforms, the standard pattern will still be to opt entirely either for science or for arts at A levels, and to continue similarly at university; and as a result many intelligent and academic children will still have no contact with any science or mathematics beyond fifteen or sixteen. In America, on the other hand, even the university degrees are less specialized than an average British A level programme. American undergraduates do a number of different subjects, often being required to cover both sciences and arts, and only concentrate on their "major" subject in their last year. When specialist training is needed, they get it in graduate school, where they do two years of intensive course-work before they are allowed to start on independent research.

The effect on British and American philosophy is as you would expect. In Britain, philosophy training is tailored to undergraduates who mostly have a minimal scientific background, and it tends to avoid the harder reaches of contemporary American work. In America, the essential philosophical curriculum is taught at graduate school, and is designed for somewhat maturer students, with a broad background covering science as well as arts. Of course British professional philosophers catch up on the necessary techniques when they need them for their research. But, still, the technical stuff isn't regarded as an essential part of a philosophical education, and this puts British philosophy at a disadvantage.

As it happens, it is Oxford among British universities that approximates most closely to the American system. Surprisingly, you can't

do philosophy on its own as an undergraduate at Oxford, but only as part of Greats, or PPE, or in a joint degree with mathematics, or physics, or modern languages, or psychology, or theology. In compensation, there is a two-year taught postgraduate degree, the BPhil, which was set up after the war under the aegis of Gilbert Ryle, to provide specialist training in philosophy. But even this doesn't really work. The Oxford dons still have to do their twelve undergraduate tutorials a week for their colleges, and don't always have a lot of time to put into postgraduate teaching. And then there's the problem of expertise again. Oxford colleges expect their dons to be competent across the undergraduate board (one don told me recently that he has a repertoire of over a hundred undergraduate topics) and so the colleges would prefer to appoint good philosophical generalists rather than specialists with technical skills to impart.

The American system of higher education isn't just good at training professional philosophers. It has quite general advantages over the British system of single-subject undergraduate degrees. After all, relatively few students in any area make careers as specialists in their subjects, and those that don't would surely be far better served by multi-subject degrees. And the minority who are going to be specialists can be much better taught in graduate school than in less demanding undergraduate courses.

If anything good is to come of the financial cut-backs in British universities, perhaps it will be by shaking them up in the direction of the American model. Up to a point, this is already happening by accident: overseas students paying high fees are now very attractive to British universities, and there is some pressure to make adjustments to accommodate them. In general, perhaps it is right to worry about the arbitrary imposition of American customs. But in the case of the British university system, it doesn't seem to me that a small dose of American cultural imperialism will do any harm.

FRENCH HISTORY

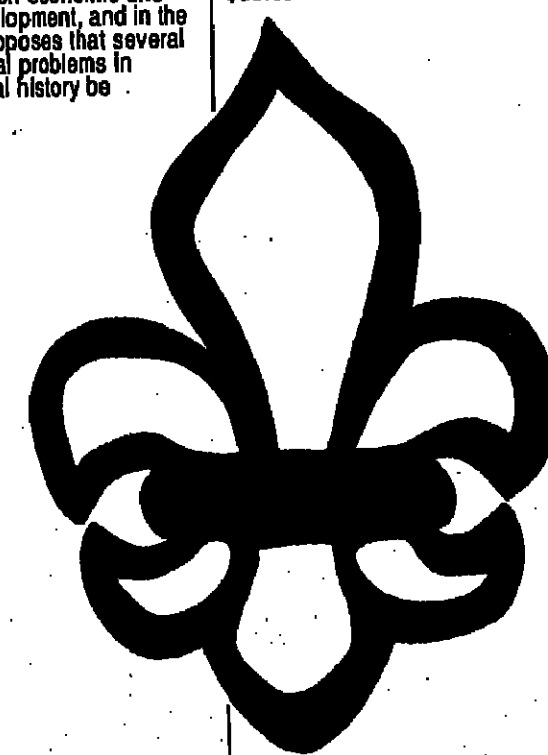
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Walt, Johannes van der; translated by Claude Swann The Seven Sketchbooks of Vincent van Gogh, a facsimile edition
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